SINGING THE BLUES, 4 | IRISH FIRST, 9 | SLICE OF LIFE, 36

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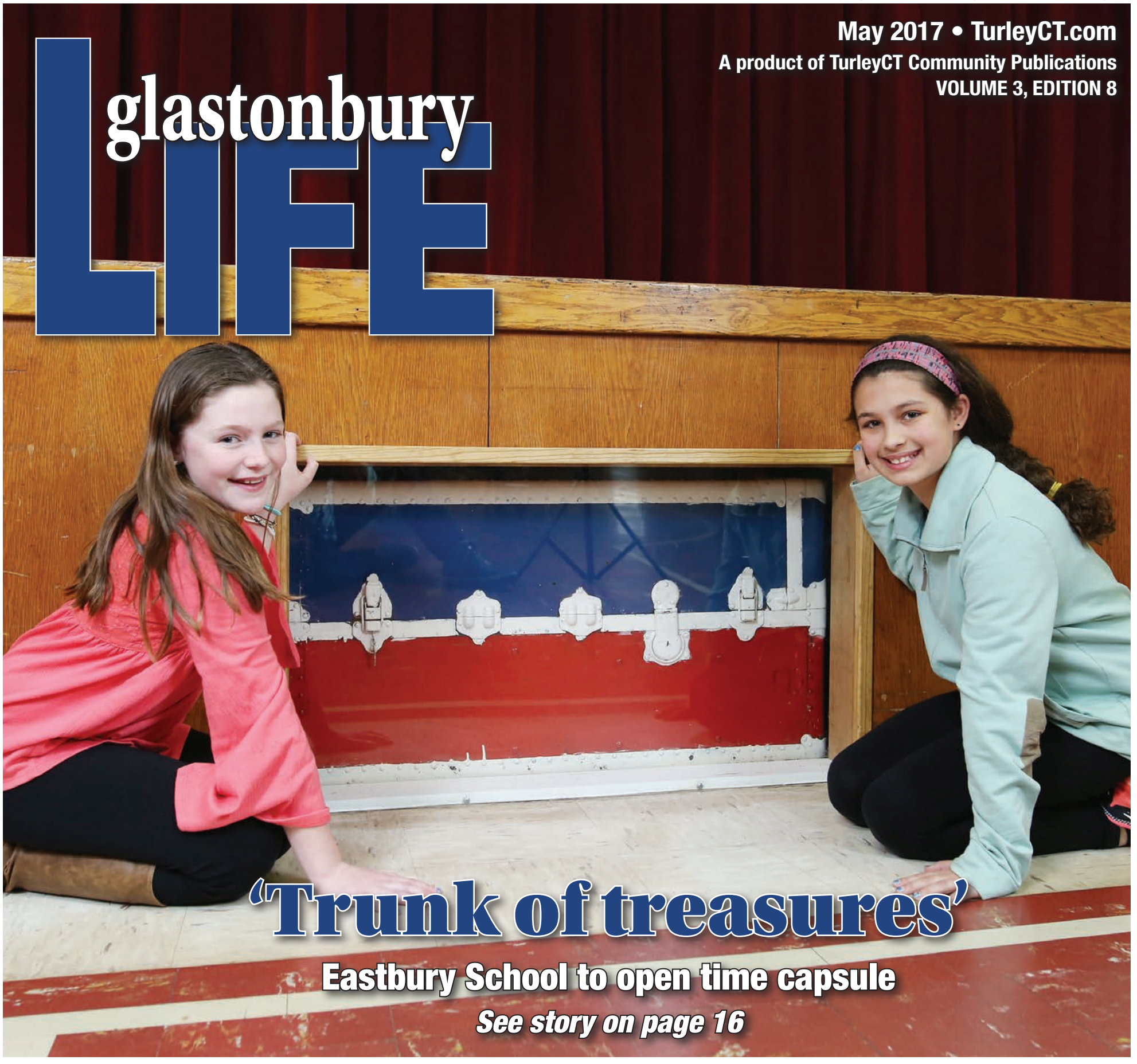
glastonbury LIFE



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See story on page 16

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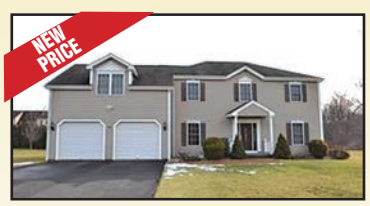

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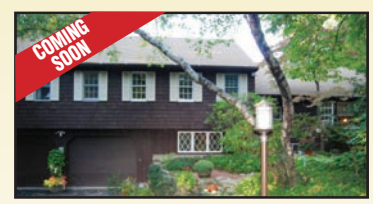

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"We're educating people and helping musicians." - *Enda Flynn, one of the organizers of the Irish First business network*

See story page 9

ON THE COVER

Hannah Kaplan and Vivian Case are looking forward to seeing what's inside Eastbury School's "trunk of treasures."

Photo by Brian Ambrose
See story page 16

4 Singing the blues
6 Nutrition and more
9 Irish First
13 New Leash on LIFE
14 Student of the month
20 Honoring her past
22 Business Notes
31 Kids Voices
36 Slice of LIFE
38 News roundup
40 Events spotlight
42 Calendar
45 Note from Nancy

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Courtesy photo

Jake Kulak, a junior at Kingswood Oxford, started playing guitar at 11. He and his band, the Lowdown, were nominated for a New England Music Award as "best new act."

Singing the blues with a side of rock

Jake Kulak is carving out his musical niche

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Like many musicians, Jake Kulak spends a lot of his time working on his craft, writing music, taking lessons and gigging out with his band, the Lowdown, at noted clubs such as Black-Eyed Sally's in Hartford, Theodores' Blues Booze & BBQ in Springfield and Cafe 9 in New Haven. He also carves out time to study for math tests and works on English essays. That's because Jake is a junior at Kingswood Oxford in West Hartford.

"Both my parents are really into music. As a little kid growing up, I was always playing different genres of music, listening to rock and roll and blues and pop," Jake said. "Listening to music in the car, I was falling in love with rock and roll and the blues."

He's been playing classical piano since he was five years old.

"That was more because my parents wanted me to learn it. It definitely helped my ear," he said. "When I was around 11, my dad said, 'Do you want a guitar for Christmas?' I got a little toy guitar and learned to play. At first I taught myself. I would just would go online and go to YouTube and look up tutorials on the basics of guitar."

As he began to progress, his father, Greg Kulak, suggested lessons and they turned to Frank Varela at Summit Studios in Manchester.

"His father came to me and said, 'My son wants to play blues.' I said, 'How old is he?' He said, '11.' Most kids who are 11 don't want to play blues. He came in and he could already kind of play; he could play the blues. He understood it right from the beginning," Varela said. "He's naturally inclined to play music. Things seem to come to him pretty easily; he doesn't have to work too hard at it. And he's very open-minded also about different genres. I'm a more jazz-influenced player and he's picked up a lot of stuff from me. He's so open to learning new stuff and he gets what I teach him; he just understands it."

While Jake might have started out wanting to play the blues, his current sound is more of a mix.

"My sound is it's rock and roll but blues-inspired; it's heavily blues-influenced. It's like modern rock with my own blues twist," Jake said.

"I listened to a lot of rock. One of my favorite musicians was Jack White. I realized a lot of the rock music I was listening to was just blues with a harder spin on it. That really got me interested. I was listening to original blues musicians like Robert Johnson and I just fell in love

with it. It's the origin of so much modern music. It's not only fun to play, it's so interesting seeing how it evolved, seeing how it shaped modern music," he said.

Jake has represented the Connecticut Blues Society for three consecutive years at the International Blues Challenge Youth Showcase in Memphis, playing at such renowned clubs as Blues City Cafe, B.B. King's Blues Club and Wet Willie's. He's also played at the Notodden Blues Festival in Norway, one of the largest blues festivals in Europe. He's a two-time recipient of the Blues Foundation Generation Blues scholarship, and this year, was named one of their "Blues Kids."

Jake and his band the Lowdown, which consists of Anthony Dailey and Jeremy Peck, are nominated for a New England Music Award in the category of "Best New Act." The awards will be presented on April 29.

Jake doesn't just play, he also writes his own music.

"I've been writing music since I picked up the guitar. In the past year or two, I've really started performing original music," he noted. "When I'm writing, what I try to do basically is think about what message I'm trying to send, what is my central idea, how to go about it. The way I see it, it's a form of storytelling. Not only do you want to write poetically and make it flow, you want to have a story. You want the listener to be connected to what you're singing. What's something I'm feeling that other people go through too and what's a poetic way to get that out? I write a lot and most gets scrapped, and once in a while, something good come out. I keep chipping away and something good will come out."

He frequently performs. His father and his mother, Debbie Dietzer, help with marketing the band.

"It's a group effort. We look for venues, send out my resume, make connections. I know promoters and we just send out emails and get the information out there. You just keep proving yourself and just email. It's lots and lots and lots of emails," he said.

It can sometimes be a lot to balance.

"The schedule is busy; it's definitely busy," he said. "We'll have gigs on Wednesday or Thursday night and I'll have a paper and a test on Friday. Also I'm looking at colleges now. Luckily my school is really understanding and they really help me pursue what I'm doing."

His favorite classes are English and history.

While his website features recordings of the band's music, he said they have no immediate plan to do any kind of album at this time.

"What our goal is now is pretty much to get our live act going strong and become the best musicians we can be. Our focus now is just performing and getting experience," he said.

Jake's many musical influences include Gary Clark Jr., Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Kendrick Lamar, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and Kanye West. Lately, he's been into the new Childish Gambino album, "Awaken, My Love!"

While he has enjoyed playing in a wide variety of venues, he did pick two favorites in the state.

"I love to perform at The Acoustic in Bridgeport and at Black-Eyed Sally's. It's a tie. They're venues devoted to music. It's such a great atmosphere. It's such a great space. There are always great crowds. The owners and booking agents are terrific. It's always a great experience to play there and there are so many talented musicians coming through and playing there. It's just a terrific time," he said. "What I really love about performing is basically just being able to jam with people and have an audience and to be able to make that connection with that audience. When you play at a club, you see all the people you're playing to. That's one of my favorite parts, seeing other people enjoy the music you're creating. That's such a fulfilling experience. There's nothing more inspiring than seeing people dancing, getting into it, having a good time. It makes the vibe." **GL**

Learn more at jakekulak.com.

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UNDER DEPOSIT
NEW LISTING!

Glastonbury - $479,900
Buttonball 4 BR 3.1 BA Gambrel Colonial is 3,165 sf w/ additional 1,000+ in finished lower level. White kitchen w/ stainless steel appliances & island w/ breakfast bar. 1st floor BR w/ full bath. Patio w/ stone walls & professional landscaping. HW floors, 4 FPs, newer roof & windows, sec. sys. & generator. Easy access to town!

UNDER DEPOSIT!

Glastonbury - $388,000
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A strong woman

Dina Beecher has a new business and a new hobby

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Although she's been athletic for many years and participated in volleyball, basketball, softball and equestrian events as a teenager, Dina Beecher has been stepping up her workout routine lately. In June she'll be participating in her first fitness bikini model competitions.

"It was just something I wanted to do. I've always admired the competitors," the mother of three teens said.

She works out seven days a week, twice a day, at both Against All Odds Personal Training LLC in Glastonbury and Iron Will Fitness of Manchester, and has a team of three working with her on everything from how to pose to nutrition.

Right now, she said her diet is basic.

"[It] consists of high protein, some carbs, some vegetables, that's probably best way to describe that. It will change the closer you get to competition. I don't know what the changes will be. I hear they're coming," she said.

She had already been a regular gym-goer when she decided to take it to the next level.

"I love it; it's part of me. I guess it's like therapy," she said with a laugh.

The upcoming competitions are in Massachusetts and in New Haven.

Ty Pratt, owner of Against All Odds, has been training Beecher for about three years, since they met at WOW! in Glastonbury.

"She is very friendly, very fun to be around, motivated, energetic, smart, talented, hardworking," he said. "I believe what makes Dina, Dina is that she's truly passionate about fitness. Her motivation, her dedication to her goals, her training, it is a lifestyle. It's not about stepping on stage and saying, 'Look at me, look at me.' It's about showing that everybody, moms, anybody, if they're wondering if they can do it, if there's any adversity you've got going on in life, if you're putting it out there, it doesn't matter how old you are, anybody can do it. If you want it bad enough, you can do it."

With her own training, Beecher learned a great deal about nutrition and supplements. In October, she opened M Nutrition by Max Muscle in the Griswold Shopping Plaza.

"I was a stay-at-home mom for a long time. It was time to do something. I love nutrition and supplements. They help a lot and you don't

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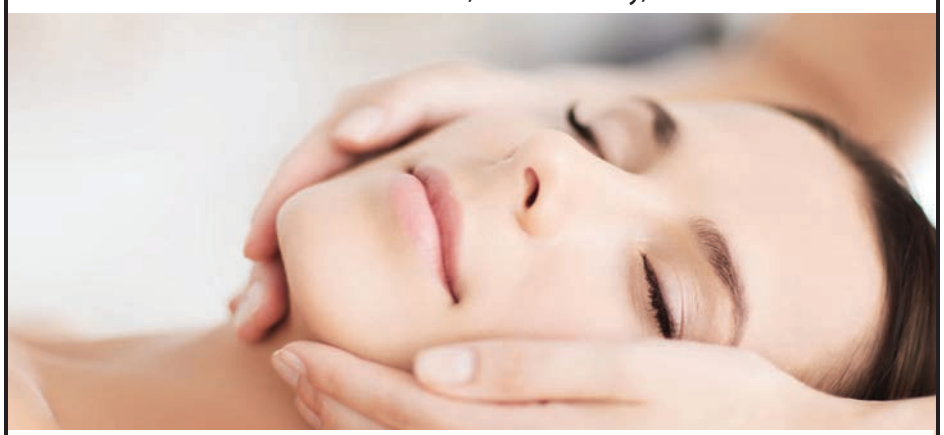

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Courtesy photo

Dina Beecher works on posing for her first fitness bikini model competitions with Carmen Hormaza, owner and fitness trainer at Iron Will Fitness of Manchester.

have to take a ton of them," said Beecher, who previously had done inside sales for an electronics components company for 12 years. "I've always wanted to have my own business. I had three kids and I stayed home with them. They were my priority and now that they're older, I think it was time for mom to do her thing."

She knows from personal experience how important nutrition is.

"Nutrition is key," she said. "I really liked how that made a difference in your body."

She already knew the brand.

"I've been taking their supplements and really liked them. There's a lot of science behind them. There are quality ingredients and there's a process they all go through," said Beecher, who's been living in Glastonbury for five years. "It just agrees with my system. That's the most important thing. You have to find something that agrees with you. You don't have to take a lot of things. You just have to find what works for you."

To help her customers find what works best, she's happy to offer samples.

"Then they can try it, and come back and buy it if like it. A lot of places don't do that," she said.

The store sells a variety of merchandise, including vitamins, protein powders and high protein snacks, such as cookies and popcorn. Beecher wants to be a resource for customers and offers nutritional counseling. She's earned her fitness nutrition certification from the International Sports Sciences Association.

"Nutrition is so important. You don't need a lot of products; you just need to find what works for you. It's not meant to be complicated. Nutrition is very, very simple, and I try to make it that way for people. When people ask what they should be eating or how many times a day they should be eating, especially with weight loss, I think simplicity is key. I think the harder you make it, that's why people don't continue with a diet. And I don't like the word 'diet.' I use the word 'nutrition,'" she said. "I never try to upsell

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Photo by Mara Dresner

here at all. I don't want people coming in and thinking you need seven different things. We start one at a time and see how you react. If you don't like it, you're not going to take it and it won't help you."

While many of her clients are athletes, others are looking for weight loss advice or information about items such as probiotics or fish oil.

"It's for anybody. It's not just for athletes," she said. "I think that it's more about what the person needs as opposed to just selling. It's about their life and finding something that works for them so they feel better and want to exercise and play their sport. And most importantly, it's just fun. It's very relaxed here. I treat them how I would want to be treated."

Pratt said that Beecher is a good match for her new venture.

"She's truly passionate about helping people out and not just selling something. She stands by her product," he said.

And as far as her chances for her upcoming competitions, Pratt has an upbeat perspective.

"I believe that she's going to win!" **GL**

M Nutrition by Max Muscle is open seven days a week in the Griswold Shopping Center, 2848B Main Street, 860-430-9708.

Dina Beecher opened M Nutrition by Max Muscle in October. She's seen the difference that nutrition and supplements have made in her own life.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."
Emma Lazarus, Statute of Liberty

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative
A Community Conversation

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(Nancy Thompson photo)

Ed Patterson is the creator of the Irish First Business Network

Promoting Irish businesses and culture

New group attracts people who are Irish, think they are Irish, or are simply Irish at heart

by Nancy Thompson
Editor

Ed Patterson had a dream. Patterson, who is proud of his Irish heritage, wanted to help Irish business owners in the area get to know and help each other and also to promote Irish culture.

With some help from a friend, his dream, known as the Irish First Business Network, has become a reality.

Patterson and Enda Flynn, the owner of Flynn's Grill in South Glastonbury, have been sponsoring meetings with Irish-American business owners from Glastonbury and in nearby communities. The first part of the get-togethers offers time for networking, followed by speakers on a variety of subjects. Then the fun, in the form of traditional Irish food, drink and music, begins with Flynn's food and entertainment by students at the Connecticut Academy of Irish Music and others, all for a suggested donation of $5 for the food and $5 to cover the cost of the music.

Patterson suggested starting an Irish networking group at the Irish American Home Society about a year and a half ago. The group started meeting there in the fall of 2015 and moved to Flynn's Grill last December.

"It's the only Irish restaurant in town," Patterson said.

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"It is a casual group with a common theme of Irish heritage that brings us together with successful networking, Irish music and education, and Guinness!"

– Carolyne Gatesy

Speakers have included Grace Brady, the executive director of the Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University; Penn Rhodeen, author of "Peacerunner," a book about former Connecticut Congressman Bruce Morrison; and Irish historian and author Cormac O'Malley.

"We're trying to pull Irish groups together," Patterson said. "The fun is an added attraction."

The group has grown from fewer than 10 to as many as 30 participants at the weekly ses-

Enda Flynn is working with Ed Patterson to help Irish business owners and promote Irish culture.

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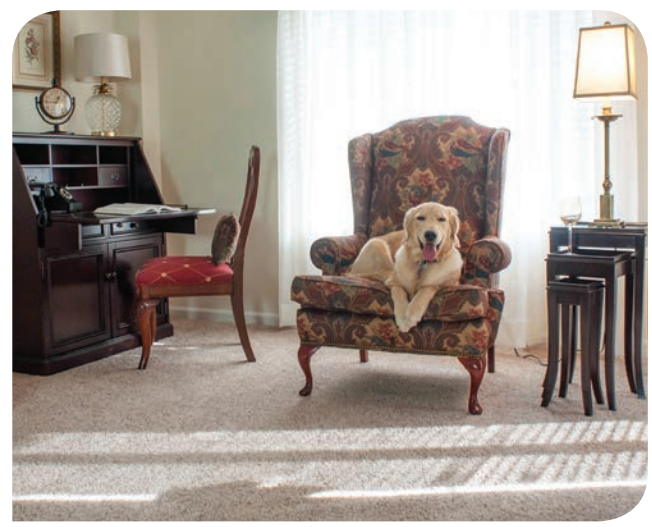

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sions. Patterson and Flynn are enjoying themselves.

"We're doing it on our own passion," Patterson said. "Business owners have their own interests, but they come to thetable. It's done in a non-sell way.It's fun. It's adventure, and I lovethat in life."

For Flynn, whose restaurant is open for breakfast and lunch, the group provides a way to network in the evening, when he's not working.

"I'm a member of the Chamber of Commerce, but I usually can't make it to their networking meetings," he said. "This makes Flynn's Grill more visible. I'd like to do more Irish stuff here. We're educating people and helping musicians, and I've done a lot of business with other people at the meetings. I have members' business cards here, and it's nice to be able to recommend people."

Local business owners enjoy the group on many levels.

"Being a part of the Irish First Business Network provides a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Irish culture and meet local business people who share a common heritage and interests," said Sean M. Peoples, an attorney at Brown Paindiris & Scott, LLP.

"I enjoy the opportunity to learn more about the Irish culture in a relaxed setting through the various presentations and guest speakers. Ed Patterson has done a wonderful job of inviting local, prominent speakers through his connections with the Irish Consulate in New York."

Carolyne Gatesy, owner of Main Street Office Center, agreed.

"Networking is a very valuable resource for my business and the Irish First Networking Group has provided me with new contacts, great business relationships and many new friends," she said. "It is a casual group with a common theme of Irish heritage that brings us together with successful networking, Irish music and education, and Guinness."

While enjoying their shared interests in Irish culture and promoting local businesses, the group's organizers come from very different backgrounds.

Flynn, who came to the U.S. from Ireland shortly after graduating from high school, worked at the former Hawthorne Inn on the Berlin Turnpike for 25 years, the last 15 as executive chef.

When he left the Hawthorne, he decided to open his own restaurant near the post office in South Glastonbury, a couple of minutes from his home.

Patterson, who is married to photographer Carrie Draghi, moved to town about four years ago.

He graduated from the State University of New York at Plattsburg with a major in communications and a minor in English and has held a variety of jobs, including wine and insurance sales, estate planning, an Internet-based chocolate company, insect and lawn control, and house painting.

He also has been an actor, a line of work that introduced him to the work of Eugene O'Neill.

"I realized that was my art," he said. "I began to understand my Irish heritage."

After what he called a 10-year odyssey, he has returned to a job as a financial advisor. He's happily married, enjoys his work, and loves promoting his Irish roots.

"It's all about relationships now," he said with a smile. **GL**

Visit the Irish 1st Business Network on Facebook or Irish1st.com to learn more.

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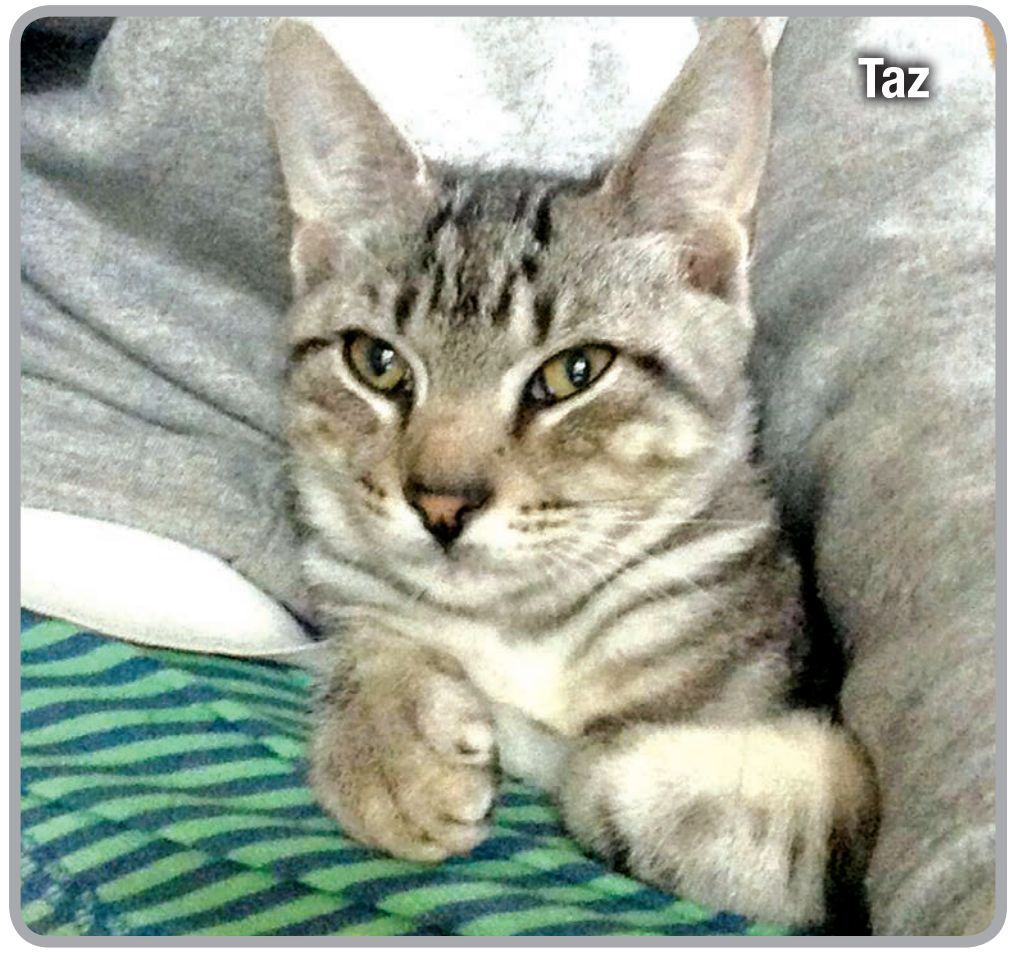

This is Taz, a six-month old male kitten who's friendly, adorable and up to date on medical care. Contact Diane at Sabita's Rescue, 860-416-3614 or Sabitasrescue@aol.com. **GL**

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Student of the month

Hannah Kaplan has been described as an inspirational leader with a great sense of humor, a motivated student and a gifted problem-solver. She's also president of the Eastbury Elementary School's student council and a black belt in karate. It's no wonder the fifth-grader is our student of the month.

Kate Zimmerman, her teacher this year, noticed Hannah when she was a second grader. "My first memory of Hannah is as a second grader across the hall. I used to see her and think to myself, 'Wow, that's a kid who's happy to be here. I hope she goes through her life with that skip in her step, smiling ear to ear, loving every minute.' I'm now her fifth grade teacher, and she is indeed that same person, but somehow even happier and more enthusiastic than she was back then. She brings positive energy to everything and everyone around her.

Beth Donovan, Hannah's teacher in fourth grade, described Hannah as one of those kids who lights up a room. "Hannah is a bright, outgoing, individual who lights up a room when she enters it," she said. "She is an extremely motivated student who always tries her best. She inspires others to do the same."

As supervisor of the school's student council, Michelle Miclette knows Hannah well. "Hannah is an effective leader because she leads by what she does, not by what she says," she said. "She is a natural connector to others and has a great sense of humor."

Eastbury Principal Janet Balthazar has known Hannah since she was in first grade. She praised her for

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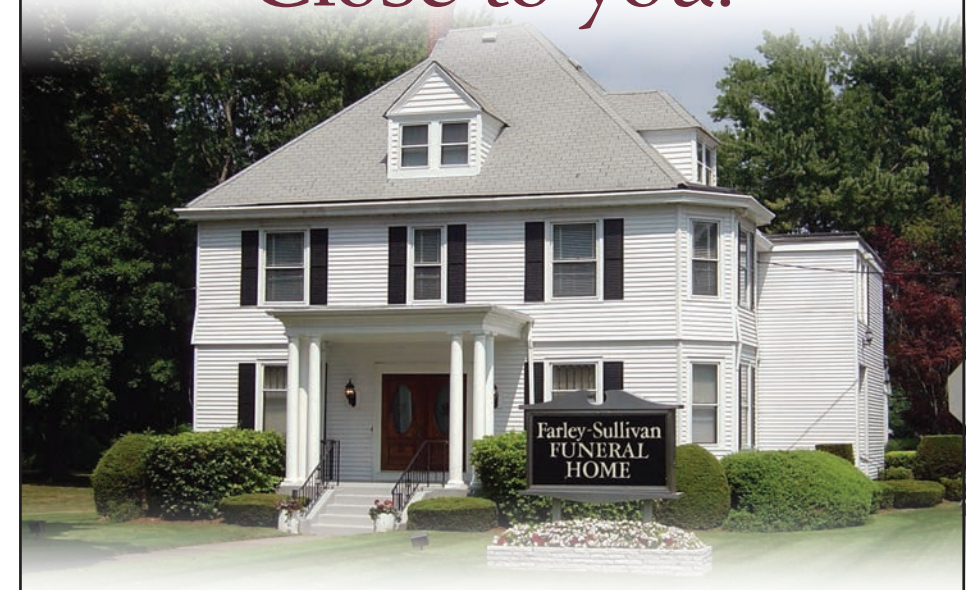

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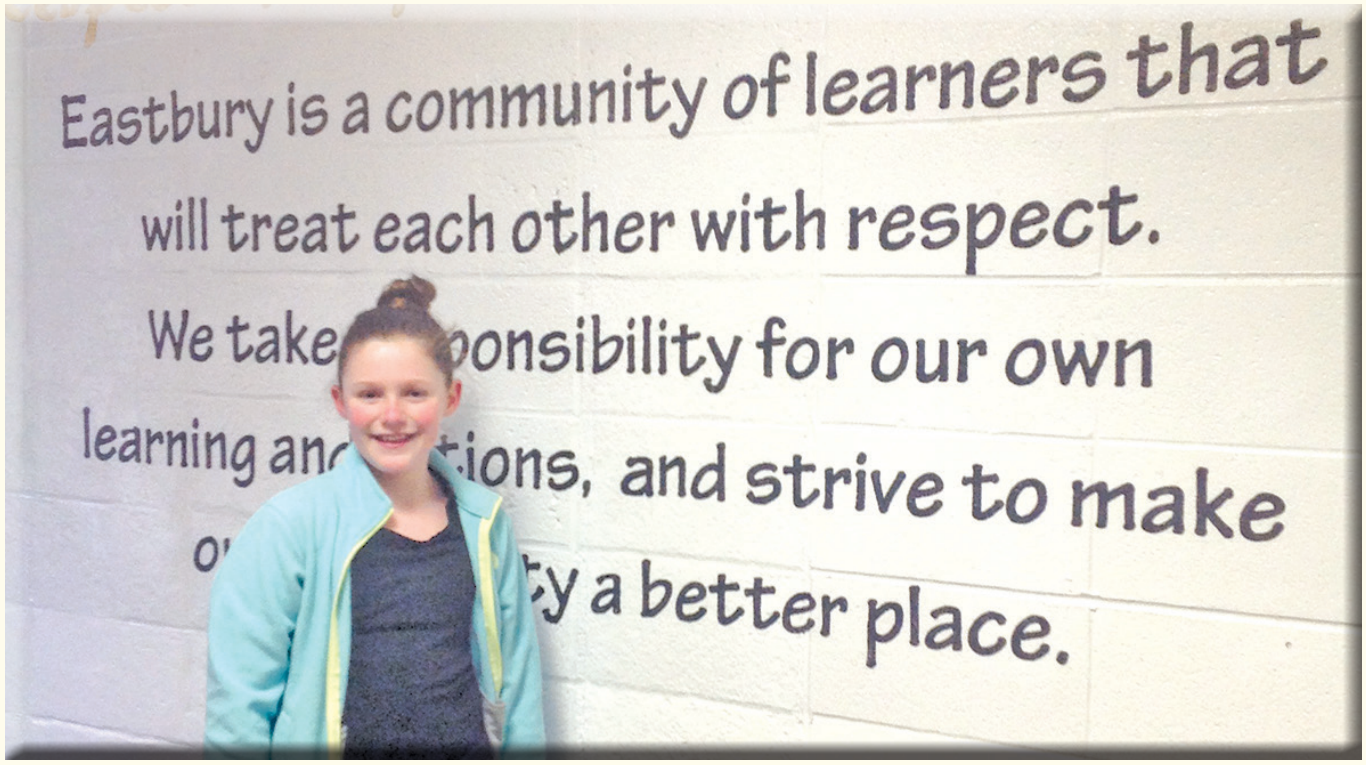

her communications skills and her demeanor. "Hannah is a student who is always smiling," she said. "She has a mature air about her, yet she is open and welcoming to all students. I met her as a first grader and even then you could see a student who was happy to be at school, ready and willing to work hard. Hannah is a student you can count on to help you solve a problem or to volunteer to help in any way. As a writer, Hannah is quite impressive. The way she communicates in the written language hardly sounds like it comes from a fifth grader. Her vocabulary is well developed and her written expression is fluid and engaging. I will miss her smiling face and positive morning greetings off the bus next year."

Hannah said she enjoys singing, dancing and acting, writing, and history. "I used to help younger children at a show choir. I was one of the people they looked up to, to learn new songs and dances," she said, adding that she herself admires Malala Yousafzai. "She won the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of 17 for her struggle against the suppression of children and other young people and for the right of children getting an education. At about 14 years old she was shot on her way back from school all because she believed in girls having an education. She survived and now she is dodging any bullets in her way. This year in student council has kind of been all over the place. I have learned more about working together with other members and how I can be the best leader to everyone. At first it was nerve-wracking to stand up in front of everyone and tell them what the schedule was, but I overcame that fear quickly. Each meeting I find myself working harder and harder and I think that makes me a great leader for student council." **GL**

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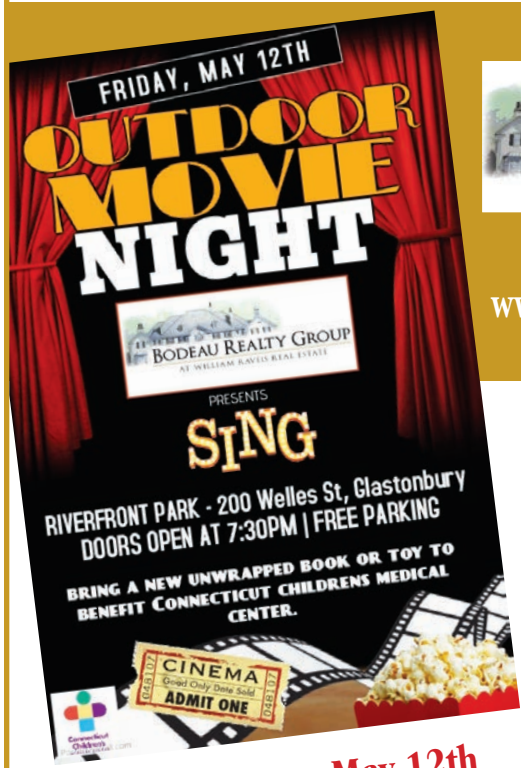
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Blast From The Past

Eastbury School's "trunk of treasures" to be opened after 41 years

by Nancy Thompson
Editor

The trunk was removed and cleaned – but not opened – and then reinserted under the school stage with its lock and key visible.

(Courtesy photos)

Eastbury Elementary School Principal Janet Balthazar had heard "a hum" about a time capsule at the school for months, but she had no idea if the rumor was true, and if so, where it might be.

"Different people had different ideas," she said.

A former student, Peggy Wagner Chaffee, turned out to be the key to unlocking the mystery.

When Chaffee, who was in second grade in 1976, heard that Eastbury might be closed, she contacted Balthazar and offered to help find the time capsule.

They met and walked the school grounds with Lee Weir, a custodian and former student there. Chaffee told them she thought the trunk had been buried in the schoolyard, but both Balthazar and Weir believed it was under the stage.

Chaffee went to the Welles-Turner Memorial Library and found two mentions of the time capsule from 1976, both saying it was under the stage.

"My memory of it being under the stage was starting to come back," she said. "I remember a red, white, and blue foot locker being on display ... and all the kids had a chance to walk by in a line to look at it. I sent the information to Janet, and she went to work."

The clippings said the trunk was supposed to be opened in 2000, but that didn't happen for several reasons, including renovations to the stage, changes in staff and a lost placard.

Balthazar was intrigued.

"This is something that, to me, was fun," she said, adding that the local board of education had not yet

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The "trunk of treasures" buried under the school stage in 1976 was clearly visible after a maintenance worker drilled a three-in hole.

Maintenance workers who buried the trunk in 1976 signed their names and left a message for whomever found it.

decided to close Eastbury at the end of the 2017-18 year.

Shortly before the start of school last year, Balthazar ran into a former custodian who said current maintenance employees had looked under the stage but were unable to find a trunk or capsule of any kind.

Not about to be thwarted in her search, Balthazar recalled that the stage was renovated in 1998 to meet accessibility requirements and asked a worker to pry off one end, where steps had been covered up during the construction project.

He removed the end, cut a three-inch diameter hole and shined a light into the interior.

"We saw a footlocker, a trunk of treasures, just like they said," Balthazar said with a smile.

She talked with Superintendent Alan Bookman to get his support to continue and watched in amazement as a foot-locker-sized opening was cut into the front of the stage, revealing a red, white and blue trunk with a bicentennial decal on top, along with a note from Tom Bidwell and Dave Mansur, the maintenance department workers who buried the trunk in August of 1976.

"Hope you had fun taking this apart," they wrote on the board covering the trunk.

"That was August 18, 1976, and we got in there on August 16, 2016, almost exactly 40 years later," Balthazar said.

They took it out but did not open it, cleaned it up, turned it around, replaced it with the lock and key showing, then installed a Plexiglas sheet to serve as a window and to prevent anyone from gaining access to the trunk. The opening was covered with a school banner and was revealed during an assem-

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The top of the "trunk of treasures" features a decal celebrating the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976.

Janet Balthazar got her first glimpse of the hidden time capsule after a maintenance worker pried the end off the school's stage.

bly to celebrate the start of the school year.

Chaffee and Bookman praised Balthazar for her persistence in finding the trunk.

"All of Janet's hard work has allowed us to reveal to the current Eastbury students that their school has a hidden treasure," she said, adding that she took part in the assembly at which current students learned about the hidden trunk.

"I think it's fascinating to see or read about the history of a school or what was important in town so many years ago," Bookman said. "For our students, it's a great learning experience. Janet's perseverance made this event really happen."

Chaffee said she remembers a few items, but didn't want to say too much for fear of ruining the surprise for today's students.

Raymond Bovich, who was Eastbury's principal in 1976, also didn't want to spoil the fun by saying too much about the trunk's contents. He did say he recalled the students standing outside with red, white and blue papers and creating a living flag. He said he's not sure, but he hopes an aerial photo of the children and their flag will be in the trunk.

Since learning about the time capsule, Eastbury students have talked about 1976 and why it was an important year, what they think might be in the trunk and why children more than 40 years ago might have thought their items should be saved. Their suggestions – along with comments – have been posted on a bulletin board near the main office.

They include sports cards "because they cost a fortune and they were very popular back then;" a Barbie doll, balls from a variety of sports, old Hot Wheels cars, a Rubik's Cube, school supplies and books, a View Master, a copy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, a Muppets tape, a newspaper and a map of the world "to tell about the times;" a GI Joe, and a chalkboard because "back then they used chalkboards at school."

They haven't opened the "trunk of treasures" yet, but already idea of a time capsule has intrigued Eastbury students, who have expressed an interest in filling and burying a time capsule of their own before the school is closed at the end of the next school year. GL

The time capsule will be opened May 6 at Eastbury School, 1389 Neipsic Road. The ceremony, which is open to all, will start at 4 p.m. with tours of the school. The "trunk of treasures" will be opened at about 5 p.m. Anyone planning to attend should send an email to Eastbury-TimeCapsule@Glastonburyus.org.

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Teaching art to seniors

Karen Williams works to honor her grandparents' memory

by Nancy Thompson
Editor

Karen Williams believes she has found the perfect way to honor the memory of her grandparents, Peter and Helen Senyk, whom she adored, and in whose home she lives.

Williams, an elementary school art teacher for the past 17 years, decided to reach out to senior citizens here and in East Hampton by offering art classes.

It's been rewarding not only for her students, but for her as well.

"It's fun seeing them feel confident doing something on their own," she said. "It's a choice for them. They want to do this. And they're so excited, saying 'Oh, my gosh! I did it! I did it!'"

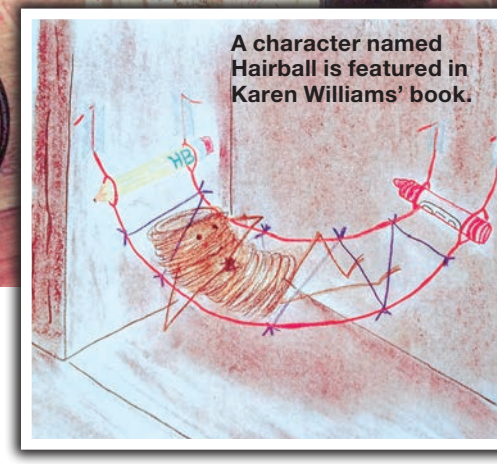
As a child, Williams enjoyed sports and art. She loved painting furniture, and continues to do that, often adding an unusual element such as a big of fur or a colorful design. She earned a degree in art education at Southern Connecticut State University and has been teaching art at Highland Elementary School in Cheshire for the past 17 years.

A couple of years ago she started an art class at the local senior center called ART with KaReN. She said she realizes that art is naturally easier for some people than others and works hard to guide even the most skeptical, reluctant student embrace their talent and the artistic process.

Among her early students was Gloria Jainchill, who met Williams in the spring of 2015 at the local senior center at an acrylics class focusing on historic scenes in town.

"I had no experiences with acrylic painting but loved the idea of painting historic scenes, especially the Ferry and Old Cider Mill," Jainchill said. "When I met Karen in our first painting class I was scared to touch a paint brush and apply it to the canvas. It had been over 50 years since my high school days of painting with tempura paints. Karen's warmth, her smile and her comforting, consoling words helped me relax enough

Karen Williams teaches art to seniors as a way of honoring her grandparents, Peter and Helen Senyk.



A character named Hairball is featured in Karen Williams' book.

Nancy Thompson photo

to stay with the class. My first painting went from sloping buildings and awkward perspectives to something that actually turned out decent. The instructions, the nuances, the techniques were easy to understand and apply, and brought back my love for painting."

She said she enjoyed working with Williams because of her upbeat personality and her love of painting and teaching it to others. "It was her enthusiasm and contagious laugher that helped me to relax and not be critical of my amateurish painting skills so I could relax and learn and get better at it," Jainchill said. "Karen is very talented in the area of art, acrylic painting and also very creative. She has lots of painting knowledge and skills and a wonderful painting side manner. Her ability to reach inside and touch the creative parts of her students is what impressed me the most about her. I enjoyed so much having the art classes with Karen."

Williams was unable to schedule classes after last summer but has continued to work with Jainchill one-on-one.

Richard Swanson also enjoyed the classes.

"I found Karen to be well organized as she had all the equipment and needs on hand," he said. "She made sure everyone who needed help got it. If one made a mistake she had the means on how to correct it, diplomatically.

I found Karen easy to work with because she was friendly and made one feel confident. She saw that one's work was an important expression of their creativity. Each one had the same items to start with but their creativity made the end product different. Karen, I felt, was the perfect teacher – one that I would have enjoyed working with when I was in school and even in any future art class."

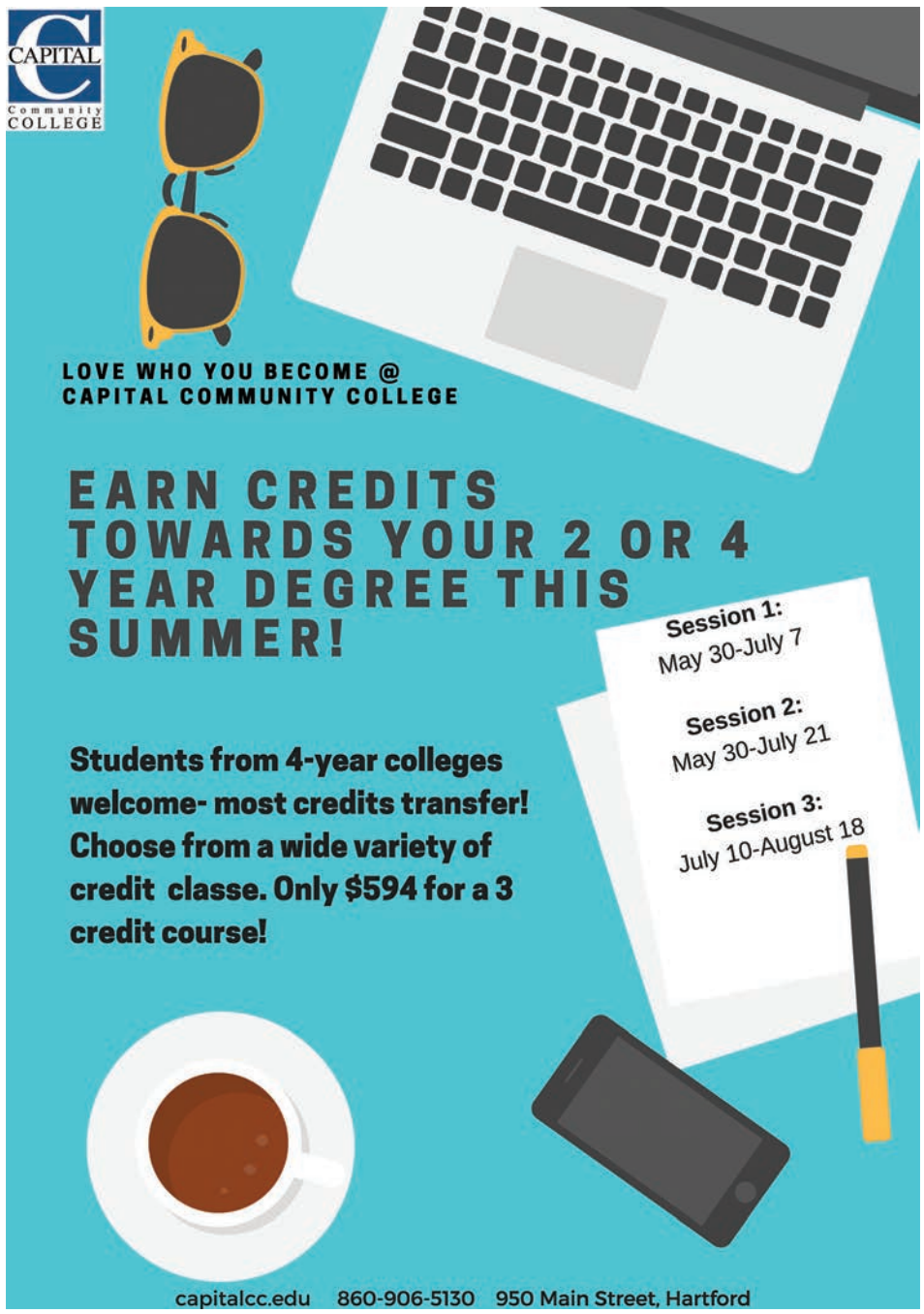
Gloria Jainchill has been studying art with Karen Williams.

Courtesy photo

In addition to her job in Cheshire and her classes for seniors, Williams is combining her creativity with her love of cats by writing and illustrating a children's book about Hairball, a mischievous bundle of fur, and his "colorful day," which she hopes will be the first in a series.

She also conducts painting parties for all ages. She provides all the painting supplies, and her students bring their favorite snacks and beverages. **GL**

To learn more about Karen Williams' classes, visit artwithkaren.com or call 203-645-2144.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Business Notes

EXIT Realty Black's first-ever Easter egg hunt raised more than $800 to help the Wethersfield Police Department's K-9 unit replace Thor, the police dog who was killed in action last fall. Children from about 150 families from around the state searched for close to 4,500 eggs at Riverfront Park.

Nicholas Damato, the owner and founder of **Damato Chiropractic Center of Glastonbury,** has been honored by the Veterans of Korean, Vietnam and Saudi Wars for the care he provides to veterans and their families through the Veterans' Choice Program.

Matthew Somberg, principal and founding partner of **Gottfried & Somberg Wealth Management, LLC,** has been named to the Financial Times list of 400 top financial advisers for 2017.

Leesa Schipani was selected to moderate a panel discussion at the Shubert Theatre for the **Human Resources Council of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce.**

EXIT Realty Black's first-ever Easter egg hunt

Nicholas Damato

C'est La Vie Day Sap had a ribbon-cutting with the CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce. The spa is at 160 New London Turnpike.

Nutmeg Technologies had a ribbon-cutting with the CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce. The company is at 279 Nutmeg Road in South Windsor.

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EAST WINDSOR **$173,900**
2BR/1.1BA private end unit in Scantic Glen community! LR w/ fp, vaulted ceiling & skylights. Lg kit w/ HW flrs, pantry. MBR w/ dble closets. Part. fin LL w/ new flooring, 2 rooms & shower. Garage & ample parking. New HWH, newer roof, security system.
KATE KELLEHER **860-944-3695**

HARTFORD **$109,900**
3BR/2BA Col w/ original woodwork, hardwood floors on first and second, dining room with built in hutch, 18'x 7'enclosed front porch, 3 parking spaces, fenced in yard, younger roof. Tenant moving out June 30th. Property sold in' as is'condition.
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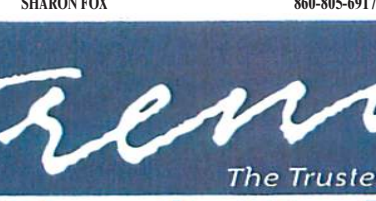

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4BR/3.1BA Col on apprx 1.8 private / wooded acres w/ fabulous views. Gourmet kit w/ granite, SS & bkfst bar open to FR. 9'ceil, HW flrs & crown moldings. MBR w/ walk-in closet & whirlpool bath. Fin walk-out LL w/ FR & full BA. In-law potential.
SILVIAORAMA.COM **860-550-4968**

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SOUTH WINDSOR **$449,900**
5BR/2.1BA colonial. Move in ready. Lg EIK walks out to 3 seas screened in porch. Hot tub & heated in-ground pool. LR w/ fp. Opn flr pln. MBR suite w/ 2 closets, spa bath & standing shower w/ rain head & dbl vanity! Fully finished walk out basement.
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*According to the 2016 REAL Trends Market Leaders report for sides in 2015.

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M. Schindler Fitness had a ribbon-cutting with the CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce. To learn more, visit acefitness.org/acefit or call 847-772-0231.

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Nicole Butler of West Hartford has been hired as a brand manager at **Cronin,** a local marketing communication agency. She majored in marketing at the University of Connecticut. Glastonbury resident Nathalie Cote has joined the agency as a staff accountant. She has a master's in business administration from Regis University.

Marilyn Rossi has joined the local office of **Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties.**

Tracy Molloy was the top listing agent and Bryan Feery was the top selling agent for March at the local office of **Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties. GL**

Marilyn Rossi

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A giving spirit

Teens are taking an active role in changing the world

by LIFE Staff

Changing the world is a tall order and sometimes goals have to be simplified for those looking to make one small difference at a time.

Among those who are making an impact are area teens who have a passion for philanthropy.

Some develop their ideas on their own, while others work through the resources they have available to them, such as at their school.

Either way, teens are learning they have the power to make a difference.

For about five years now, Simsbury High School has had an office for Athletics and Student Activities. Here, students can get support for the clubs and activities they are interested in pursuing and be paired with a student advisor.

"Athletics, clubs and activities provide a much needed real connection to life at Simsbury High School," Jeffrey Pinney, director of the Athletics and Student Activities Office said. "We pride ourselves on providing the most choices in what we allow students to pursue as they look to find their passion and learn to participate in the community that they live in."

"Being involved in things larger than themselves", Pinney said, motivates the students at his school.

"As they are looking to figure out who they are, they look for others with like interests and for good causes and we foster that involvement through this office," Pinney said. "Our students do include this information on their college applications, but as a way to showcase what they are interested in and how they have gained real world experience while being high school students."

Clubs at Simsbury High School range from the student newspaper and student council to a club that teaches the basics of American Sign Language, one which helps raise money to cover medical expenses for an ill student and another explores the field of aviation.

"The more a student and family feels connected to a school community the more they work to be successful in that community and there is a direct impact on their level of academic success associated with that," Pinney continued. "We utilize athletics and activities as a way to positively engage students and families in a genuine learning experience through finding a connection with other students and working with larger outside organizations to engage in real-world learning. There is a tremendous amount of positive and important learning that goes on in the classrooms at SHS, but the real experience comes through these avenues outside of the classroom."

Russell Crist, an English teacher and student activities director at Farmington High School, agreed.

"All students have academics in common, but sports, clubs, and activities give students the opportunity to follow a passion, meet new people, and improve the school community and beyond," Crist said. "These activi-

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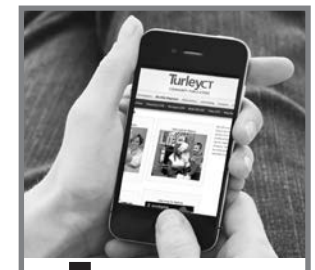

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ORANGE (203) 881-0599
801 Baldwin Rd.,
(At Derby Ave./Rt. 34)

ROCKY HILL (860) 563-9096
558 Cromwell Ave.,
(Rt. 3 Exit 23 Off I-91)

GLASTONBURY (860) 659-3002
586 New London Tnpk
(At Rt. 17 Overpass)

ties help students to feel more connected and positive about their high school experience. My goal is to give every student the opportunity to participate in a club or activity that they are interested in or have a passion for. We tell students that your high school experience is what you make of it, being involved with student government, clubs, and sports will only improve that experience."

Students at FHS have 80 clubs to choose from with more being considered. One club, InterAct, has 100 members and completes hundreds of hours of community service through the school year, Crist said.

This particular club requires members to complete a certain number of volunteer hours in order to retain membership.

Any student interested in starting a club at FHS should talk to Crist and fill out an application.

Approved clubs will then be assigned a student advisor.

"We look to add clubs that support the Farmington Public Schools Vision of the Graduate, promoting innovation, collaboration, self-direction and resourcefulness, and finally, a positive school climate," Crist said.

Stephanie Austin was one such student who talked with Crist as she thought about developing a new club. A sophomore at Farmington High School, Stephanie knew first-hand the needs of the Farmington Food Pantry as her mother is on the executive board of the organization.

"We always talk about what's going on at the pantry," Stephanie said. "I would often help her with some social media for the pantry. My mom told me about the need for more food drives to address the growing demand to accommodate more Farmington families in need of food assistance. We started brainstorming ways for the community and businesses to host food drives. More food drives meant more volunteers needed to process the incoming food and that's where I came in. This winter, I volunteered myself and a few of my friends to help and, from there, we came up with the idea to form a 'formal' club at FHS. High schoolers are always looking for ways to get involved."

Stephanie went through the proper channels of getting the club off the ground at her school. This included creating a goal for her club and submitting it to the student activities director for approval.

The goal for her club, Stephanie said, was to assist the food pantry and organize and advertise for upcoming food drives, such as an event on May 13, the 25th Annual Letter Carrie's Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive.

"It's great having my drivers license because I can now help collect food from drives and drop off at the pantry. Any food brought to the pantry must be accounted for. We process food by weighing it, date checking and shelving the food," she said.

"I have been volunteering in a number of community service activities throughout Farmington and neighboring communities for a few years now," Stephanie continued. "I enjoy working and meeting people at various organizations. Whether I am preparing meals at St Peter's Aides House in Hartford or working a food drive in Farmington, for me, working is fun and knowing that I am helping others feels great."

Sometimes adults don't take kids seriously.

When Ian Costello of Simsbury was in fourth grade, he wanted to start a club through which he and his fellow students could do something to help people.

It all started after he went to a social justice camp during summer vacation.

"Really if I hadn't gone to camp, I'd feel a lot more ignorant of the issues," he said.

While he was at camp, he and fellow campers went on a trip to Toronto where they did some volunteer work for the homeless.

The conditions under which they lived surprised him.

"That definitely sparked something," he said. "Beforehand I was just ... just a kid."

When he went back to school in the fall, Ian learned about an organization founded by Jason Raz, one of his favorite musicians, and thought he would start a club under that organization's umbrella, which was called

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Free the Children and is now WE.

"I got instantly so sucked into the idea and I brought it to my school," Ian said.

Looking back, the seventh grader at Henry James Middle School, reflected on how adults reacted when he told them what he wanted to do.

"I was only in fourth grade, so it was a hard thing for me to push out to adults. They didn't take it seriously," Ian said. "I didn't believe that: that just because I was younger I couldn't help people. That was probably one of the biggest challenges."

He didn't give up and insisted that despite his youth he could do something important. Soon enough, the Tootin Hills School Take Action Club was founded.

Ian has two pet causes.

"Hunger and education really take the cake for me. If I could solve anything it would be hunger and education," he said.

The Tootin Hills Take Action Club focuses on global issues, including hunger and education, said his mother, Jane Costello. It took root quickly, with many students jumping on board to volunteer.

"That very first year the kids learned a lot about local issues with hunger," she said. "They did WE Care Hunger, a massive food drive."

Because the club works under the WE Organization umbrella, projects the students undertake get wider coverage, with children from schools all over the country and world working on them as well.

"The thing that makes the WE Organization cool is that the kids did it in conjunction with 1,000 other clubs in the U.S. and U.K" she said. "It makes them feel like they are part of bigger thing. The organization works in nine countries."

Tootin Hills Take Action has also helped build a school in Lor Rios, Ecuador. Currently, Take Action, which has branched into Squadron Line and Latimer Lane schools in Simsbury, is raising money to help a village in Haiti.

Ian has also helped to lead another volunteer effort.

He and Sarah Ackels, who is 14, started the Sarah Stops Hunger Campaign, under the Feeding Children Everywhere umbrella.

Sarah was 11 at the time. She was inspired after she went to an event and learned about things people were doing to end hunger.

She talked to Feeding Children Everywhere and learned what she needed to do. First, she wanted to raise money so she started by going to local businesses asking for donations and sponsors. Next, she got volunteers and arranged to package meals for food pantries.

Some people said no, but by the time she got her first rejection, she already had plenty of support, she said.

"The most challenging thing was learning how to talk to people and ask for money so they could trust an 11-year-old girl," she said.

According to her mother, it was a learning experience.

"I think that the biggest thing she learned right off the bat was how hard it was going to be when people said no," her mother, Debi Ackels, said. "That was a big struggle she had to overcome."

Sarah's confidence grew with each 'yes' and when she saw how much respect she was getting for making an effort, Ackels said.

"People said, 'Wow, not everybody's doing this,'" she said. "You're something special and you're doing this."

Sarah plans to work harder to end hunger.

"I think that it's such a sustainable, a reachable goal, there's so much food in the world," she said. "I just can't imagine being hungry all the time."

The Sarah Stops Hunger Campaign has made more than 70,000 meals. Sarah's next fundraising event will be at Flatbread in Canton Tuesday June 6.

Kevin Kurian, a sophomore at Simsbury High School, is another kid who wants to help others.

He believes a computer can change a life and founded Project LISA, a 51c-3 non-profit, with the goal of giving computers and wireless routers to academically gifted and financially needy students in the village of Kuravilangad and surrounding areas, in the state of Kerala, India.

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children attending the biggest school in the town, St. Mary's Boys and Girls school, which educates children in grades six through 12.

The notion came from a story about his grandfather, who passed away last summer.

"He was a really charactered man and I wanted to do something in his honor," Kevin said.

In the late 1980s, Kurian's grandfather learned that friend's child planned to drop out of school. Hoping it would keep him in school, he gave him an Apple LISA, a computer released in 1983.

"He took it and learned how the computer worked and he learned to code with that computer and now that child is a software engineer at Google," Kevin said. "It's just crazy to think that the donation of one computer could change his life so much from living in a rural town in India to going to the Silicon Valley."

Kevin, who was born in the U.S. after his parents moved here in the 1990s, wanted to follow in his grandfather's footsteps, and even do more good deeds, so he founded Project LISA.

The goal is to raise $50,000 to buy the computers for the children from Kuravilangad.

"I think it's really important that we start to educate kids," Kevin said. "We have lots of problems in the world and we need everyone, not just the people in America, to fix these problems."

According to Kevin, there was a great deal of paperwork to do to attain a 501(c) 3 certification, but that wasn't the biggest challenge.

"It was fear," he said. "We were all afraid that we wouldn't succeed in our enterprise for numerous reasons. We thought we wouldn't be able to raise anything past $1,000 and we thought that there would be a negative reaction to our charity due to growing political sentiment against charitable works abroad."

He and the four friends who joined the effort were able to overcome that problem and have raised a significant amount of money, Kevin said. They plan to travel to India in July to deliver the computers.

Michelle Franklin, a senior at Glastonbury High School and president of the school's Key Club, has been volunteering since she was 3 years old when she helped with the Portland Food Bank, which her grandmother runs. She also has traveled to Florida to volunteer at Give Kids the World as a way to repay the group for its kindness when her sister, now cancer-free, was battling Hodgkin's disease several years ago.

"I have always had a passion for helping others in any way that I can and putting the needs of others before myself," she said.

While she had participated in a variety of volunteer activities before high school, she said she felt that the Key Club was "the perfect resource" to fulfill her dreams of helping others.

Michelle said she enjoys seeing the positive impact her efforts have on individuals and groups. "Seeing the gratitude of those who receive the services that I provide is a feeling I would never trade in for the world," she said. "It truly touches my heart when I see the smiles and appreciation that flow from those I serve."

She said her favorite volunteer activity has been the "No Child Fights Alone" fundraiser she started in memory of Luke Gary Dunn, a local boy who died of liver cancer when he was 17 months old.

The first drive, in 2015, raised more than $600 dollars for Connecticut Children's Medical Center and provided 250 note cards with inspirational messages for the cancer patients at the hospital.

"Seeing the gratitude of the coordinator of donations at CCMC was so powerful and special and truly touched me," she said. "Thinking of the impact that I had, along with all of the students who donated to the fundraiser, makes me feel accomplished and grateful for the opportunities that I have been able to provide for the club. The impact that I can have on others is the most important part of my work with community service."

The fundraiser was so successful that the Key Club ran it again last fall and plans to continue it as an annual event.

"Community service should become a part of everyone's life

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because of the positive light it can bring to the lives of many," Michelle said. "No act of kindness is too small."

For Rocky Hill High School junior Haley Doll, giving back to the community has always been an important part of her life.

While looking at the options for extracurricular activities at school this past fall, the 17-year-old was struck by something missing.

"I always knew that we could start our own clubs in school," she said. "I saw that we didn't have any specifically set fundraising club so I thought, why not?"

After realizing that she wanted to give back, Haley said she had to figure out how. She started to think about what skills she possessed that could be marketable and remembered that she used to make brightly colored bracelets out of string.

"A lot of girls have had an obsession with friendship bracelets at least once in their life," she said with a laugh.

With this, Haley began Rocky Hill High School's Bracelets for Benefits. She began putting signs up around school and talking to friends to see who would join her. The club now has over 25 members who get together every other week to make bracelets.

"The first idea was to sell bracelets and each month have a different cause," Haley explained. "We realized it was more realistic to do it once a quarter."

For their first sale, the group worked to benefit breast cancer research. After selling their bracelets, which range from $2 to $5 depending on thickness, the group raised $300.

Following that, the club decided to raise money for the Adopt a Family program through Rocky Hill's social services.

"We wanted to raise money for families who needed help around the holidays," Haley said.

She and the other members of the club continued to sell their bracelets at football games but also began selling them at school and at booths they set up outside of the local Stop and Shop. With their increased efforts, the group raised nearly $1,000.

Looking forward, Haley said that the next cause would be for the veterans' home in Rocky Hill. The group is in the midst of creating bracelets to sell and will begin the sale on May 13.

Haley said that she is proud of the work she and the other members of Bracelets for Benefit have created and she hopes that it will continue on into the future.

"I'll be here next year to run it, but I want it to be set enough that after I graduate it can continue," she said.

West Hartford's Hall High School senior Audrey Fromson was raised in a family that stressed "our differences are what makes the world go around."

In conjunction with her bat mitzvah, she began volunteering at Hebrew HealthCare, working with dementia patients.

"I do that on my own," she said.

Upon coming to Hall, she was looking for an opportunity to learn, and to connect with the school community as well as local and global communities. The Human Rights Coalition became that vehicle, and this year she's served as its co-president. Among the projects she took part in – along with other coalition members and the group's advisor – was teaching English to the children of a Syrian refugee family last summer, giving them a head start on the school year.

During this school year, the group focused on girls' access to education.

"I really value what we do," Audrey said of advocating for those whose rights have been violated.

"Everyone deserves an equal opportunity," she said.

"I have learned that real change starts with knowledge about a topic. I have also learned that so many human rights issues are intertwined and overlap. For example, water scarcity is not only a water issue but an education issue. When girls spend hours a day collecting water for their families, they loose out on a classroom experience."

Audrey plans on taking human rights courses in college and continuing to advocate for topics she's passionate about. **GL**

Into the Woods We Went

by Stephen Boucher
Glastonbury High School

Though the weather outside begs to differ, spring is here, and with it came the annual spring musical. This year's selection was Into the Woods, a Broadway play that combines several classic fairy tales into its own creation. Into the Woods was chosen because of a combination of relevance – the original play was adapted into a major motion picture in 2014 – and the results of a poll among drama club members. According to a member of the GHS tech crew, "Into the Woods has challenging dance sequences, and straddles the line between lightheartedness and seriousness ... We feel like this really put audiences in the seats."

While most people may not be familiar with Into the Woods itself, the story weaves together several classic fairy tales, which include Jack and the Beanstalk, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and Hansel and Gretel. The plot centers around a baker and his wife, who have been cursed by a witch, making them unable to have a child. The witch explains that in order to break the curse, they must gather four ingredients: "the cow as white as milk, the cape as red as blood, the hair as yellow as corn, and the slipper as pure as gold." This leads the couple to begin their titular journey into the woods.

Into the Woods is a unique musical due to its ability to balance the fantasy of Disney's fairy tales with the darkness of placing its character in mortal peril. The tech crew also faced numerous challenges, such as the dilemma of how to cram the sprawling scenery of Broadway and Hollywood onto the GHS stage. Compared to the previous play, Lend Me a Tenor, which only required two sets, Into the Woods was a tremendous undertaking. It wasn't difficult just for the tech crew, either. I spoke with Max Moore, who played the Mysterious Man. "Everyone's excited, but a little nervous at the same time," he said. Despite the numerous obstacles, the cast and crew put on a show for the ages. **GL**

Sunny Sanderson and Maddi Bowman perform in "Into the Woods" at Glastonbury High School.

Evan Mitchell and Danny Hassett perform in "Into the Woods" at Glastonbury High School.

Katy Dube, Xena Foster, Madison Schulman, Anna Carlson, Lizette Rosa, Katherine Wojcik and Allison Dourrough strike a pose in the Glastonbury High School Drama Club's production of "Into the Woods."

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On the road and back home again

Barbara Theurkauf is committed to community

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Barbara Theurkauf is living in the house she grew up in, but it took traveling around the world to truly settle back home again.

For years, Theurkauf was a road warrior, spending 45 or more weeks a year traveling for business. From Switzerland to Mexico, the business consultant would often leave on a Sunday morning and return on a Friday night.

After graduating from Glastonbury High School and earning her degree in business administration from the University of Connecticut, she first worked in the insurance industry in information technology.

"Then I wanted to get more into the business side of the world," she explained.

She earned her master's from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, next working for a consulting company.

Despite the many types of environments she's been in, she found a common thread.

"People are the same all over," she said, with similar business issues, whether that's needing to redesign a process or help get employees on board with a new focus.

"There are cultural differences but if you just give it some time and get to know the people, people are nice. With a consulting arrangement, when you come in, the employees don't want you there. They don't know why you're there. Are you there to fire people? Are you going to change things? There's always resistance. My tactic is always to try to adapt to their culture. What's their pace of doing meetings? Do they start on time; do they not start on time? Once you get to know people, people are nice. You just need to give it a chance, to understand where coming from," she said.

Theurkauf said that being aware of possible language issues was important.

"My Spanish is pretty good, but when I first went to Mexico, I hadn't spoken since college. I was conducting meetings in English, so they're speaking their second language. You just need to give it some time. I would say, 'Here's what I heard. Is that what you meant?' It's the same thing you should do here in the United States. You just need to go back and clarify. Whenever I left a client and a country, I always felt I had new friends," she said.

Her love of travelling was nurtured as a child.

"When we were kids growing up – I was one of four – my parents would save up for a big trip. They thought it was important to go to places and see things," she said.

While they would go to Maine or Vermont each summer, she also remembers trips to the Virgin Islands, Greece and Venezuela.

"My father would buy these package things and then we would go off and do our own things. My parents were big into food and cook-

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Courtesy photo

Barbara Theurkauf used to travel 45 weeks a year for business. Now that she's in town, she's involved with numerous community causes.

ing. We would find a little place, drive out there, and he would go into the kitchen and point at stuff, because he didn't speak the language, and they would bring it out," she remembered.

It's a different experience being on the road for business.

"When people hear you're traveling for business, they think, 'Isn't that great?' It's stressful," she said. "You're working 12, 18 hour days. It's a good experience but you're working. It's not like you're going on vacation."

Eventually, she tired of it.

"I just kind of hit my limit; it was just too exhausting," she said. "I was working in Mexico, and my mother had a mild stroke. Here is a cultural difference. I got a phone call, and the clients, they were senior executives, said, 'It's your mother,' – mothers are paramount in Mexico – 'You have to go home.' They said, 'You have to go on a plane; don't worry about us.' It was wonderful having that kind of support, but you realize things happen and you're so far away. I commuted to Mexico City for a year and you're just exhausted. I got to a point where I really wanted to be home. That happened to be the summer of 2001 and then 9/11 occurred. My brother was killed. My two business partners and friends were killed. My father had just been diagnosed with colon cancer."

She decided she wanted to stay closer to home and found a consulting project with Webster Bank in Waterbury.

"It was a stressful, horrible time in so many ways," she said, although it led in part to her starting her own consulting firm, Theurkauf Consulting, and specializing in strategy execution, transformation and change management

"I'm doing many of the same things I've always done, helping clients to facilitate strategy, prioritize initiatives. They may need support as to how do we implement or get organized. They may have a set of changes that need to get done. So often companies, big or small, they have people that can do these things, but they all have full-time jobs. I can't do many of these things for you; I can only help you get these things done. You have to own it," she said.

As she began to settle in to staying in one place, she knew she wanted to increase her involvement in the community. She served as treasurer and capital campaign chair for House of Bread from 2004 to 2011, as a member of the Glastonbury Historic District Commission since 2003, and has been the commission's chair since 2008. She also has served as a board member of the Children's Education Opportunity Foundation, its treasurer from 2004 to 2013, and its chair since 2013, and as a board member since 2012 of My Sisters' Place, where she now serves as president.

Her family has always been involved in helping others.

"I was raised that way," she said, although that wasn't necessarily through formal volunteer work.

"When I grew up, if there was a friend, somebody who needed help, [my parents] would do what they could do," she said. "There are stories about my great-grandmother from the early-1900s. They were farmers in New Jersey. She found out the Polish migrant workers who were coming through and helping them, would have a baby and go back to the fields, and she was, 'Oh no, oh no no no no.' There was a floor in the house that was like a maternity wing. The week before they were due, they would come in and call the doctor and they would stay there for few days. There's a history over the generations of people doing things for the community."

LIFE welcomes input from our readers.

Please send us your letters to the editor, calendar announcements, photos, people notes and story ideas about interesting people and organizations in town. You may send items to LIFE, 540 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070 or email Nancy Thompson at nthompson@turleyct.com.

MANCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

May Events

Music Students Recital. 5/1, 6:30 p.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium. Students from the Music Studies program will perform a variety of selections. Info: Carolina Flores at 860-512-2640 or email cflores@manchestercc.edu.

Campus Visits. SSC Atrium. Regional representatives will be on campus to discuss transfer opportunities. Info: Robert C. Turner, Jr. at 860-512-3328 or email rturner@manchestercc.edu.

Central Connecticut State University. 5/2, 10 a.m.
Bay Path University. 5/3, 10 a.m.
University of Saint Joseph. 5/3, 10 a.m.

Capstone Lecture-Recital. 5/4, 6:30 p.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium. Music students are required to present a lecture-recital in the last semester of their degree. Come to hear wonderful music and support graduating music students. Info: Carolina Flores at 860-512-2640 or email cflores@manchestercc.edu.

Chorale and Madrigal Singers Concerts. The MCC Chorale and Madrigal Singers will perform at the following venues. Info: Carolina Flores at 860-512-2640 or email cflores@manchestercc.edu.

Lincoln Theatre at the University of Hartford. 5/5, 7:30 p.m.
Woolsey Hall, Yale University. 5/7, 4:30 p.m.
First Congregational Church of Granby. 5/21, 4:30 p.m.

Spain Travel Abroad Information Session. 5/9, 12 p.m., 5/10, 10 a.m., and 5/11, 12 p.m., SSC Cafeteria. Experience the beauty and allure of this international melting pot with travel to Barcelona, Granada, Madrid, Seville, Toledo and Valencia during this 11-day tour in March 2018. Learn about credit options, payment options and why you should travel. Info: Kerry McNiven at 860-512-2716 or email kmcniven@manchestercc.edu.

FAFSA Help. 5/9, 4 p.m.; 5/17, 1 p.m.; and 5/24, 10:30 a.m., SSC L177. Please bring the following: FAFSA ID (username and password), your parent(s) 2015 tax return and W2 (if filed and you are a dependent student), your 2015 tax return and W2 (if you filed), and you and your parent(s) SSN, DOBand marital status. Info: Tracey Hadden-Deptula at 860-512-3387 or email thadden-deptula@manchestercc.edu.

Spring Arts Festival. 5/12, 6:30 p.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium. The MCC music program will present a concert featuring the Jazz, Chamber, Chorale and Madrigal ensembles. Come and enjoy the music, as well as the artwork of MCC students from the Visual Arts Department. Info: Carolina Flores at 860-512-2640 or email cflores@manchestercc.edu.

We Got Rhythm! 5/19, 1:30 p.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium. What would vaudeville be like if it existed in the 21st century? From Irving Berlin to Pharrell Williams, Ellen Lovino and Larry Ruhl will take a musical journey exploring life, love and the pursuit of tappiness! Info: Sheila Springsteen at 860-627-0444 or email sspringsteen@aol.com.

MCC Foundation Scholarship Awards Ceremony. 5/23, 6 p.m., SBM Charitable Foundation Auditorium. The MCC Foundation welcomes Fall 2017 scholarship recipients and their guests to an awards ceremony, where certificates will be presented. A short reception follows the presentation. Info: Erin O'Neil at 860-512-2903 or email eoneil@manchestercc.edu.

Annual Awards Ceremony. 5/24, 6 p.m., SBMCF Charitable Foundation Auditorium. Info: Sandi Browne at 860-512-2605 or email sbrowne@manchestercc.edu.

53rd Annual Commencement. 5/25, 5:30 p.m., Bicentennial Band Shell, MCC campus. Info: Umesh Vig at 860-512-3204 or email uvig@manchestercc.edu., or visit www.manchestercc.edu/commencement.

All events are free and open to the public, unless otherwise noted, and are subject to change without notice. For current information or notices of cancellation, click on "View All Events" on MCC's web site: www.manchestercc.edu.

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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

Theurkauf often comes to her volunteer work through people she knows.

Her mother had been a long-time board member of House of Bread in Hartford.

"They started as a soup kitchen and expanded into transitional living programs; they have a day center. They were the first place in Hartford where people could get out of the cold and go inside and take a shower. My parents were all about cooking and food and helping. Whenever I was home, when they would have their annual hunger banquet, I would be involved. My father died from colon cancer, and shortly thereafter my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. They asked me to be on the board, so for a time, we were both on the board," she said. "It's a passion, feeding people who were otherwise on the street. Everyone should have a meal."

She became involved with Children's Education Opportunity because of a friend, which is also how she connected with My Sisters' Place, although she had known about it for a long time.

"My father used to cook meals for My Sisters' Place when it was an emergency shelter," she said. "We are always looking for people with interest and passion to work as volunteers on committees or as board members to be more involved with strategy and direction. We always want to be looking for people who are fresh. Ultimately you hang around because you're interested."

"Barbara brings a focused and innovative demeanor to the board. She is someone who listens, asks questions and engages those around her. Her ability to dive deeper into matters to understand the strategic ramifications to the agency is very much appreciated," said Kathleen Shaw, vice president for programs and operations of My Sisters' Place.

My Sisters' Place is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year

While Theurkauf enjoys putting her consulting skills to work to help the nonprofit community, she also likes more nitty-gritty opportunities.

"I go to Saint Patrick-Saint Anthony Church in Hartford. If they need somebody to go in and make sandwiches, once again, it's just people that need food, and I can make sandwiches," she said.

She sees her background as influential in her choices.

"I was raised in Catholic environments. You're supposed to do for others. You do what you can for others. I do it now not because I feel I'm obligated but because when you do it you feel good. Even if it's just seeing a little kid take a doughnut on community Sunday, when you know somebody is not living on the street, that they're in a safe place, that they have a meal to eat. Sometimes you feel like the little Dutch boy holding his finger in the dike, that it may never end," she said. "If everybody does a little, you can make an impact." **GL**

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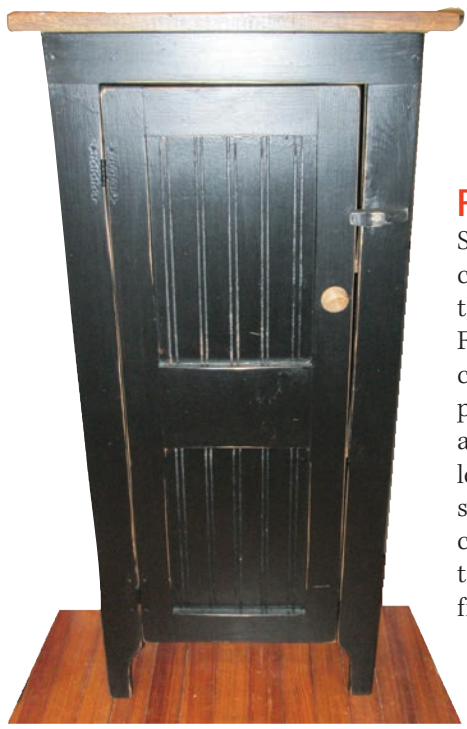

Rustic furniture

Steven Schmidt of Hamden creates rustic furniture, such as this distressed look jelly cabinet. Featuring several shelves, this cabinet has a stained top and a painted body, but special orders are welcomed to get exactly the look you want. He also creates storage benches (which double as coffee tables), TV consoles, sofa tables and other furniture. You'll find his original creations at Anything Goes, 255 Hebron Avenue, 860-430-2800, anythinggoesct.com.

Dressing up a dresser

This 1940s French provincial dresser is finished in Annie Sloan chalk paint with no sanding and no stripping required! The six-drawer dresser is in Paris gray and sealed with a combination of clear and black wax. It sells for $525. Custom orders are also available, as are a variety of other pieces. Or take a class to learn the techniques and create your own classics at Artisan's Boutique, 30C Hebron Avenue, 860-633-3555, artisansboutiquellc.com.

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Slice of LIFE

photos by Brian Ambrose

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The first farm event of the season at Killam-Bassette Farmstead drew a huge crowd on a beautiful spring day.

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Killam-Bassette Farmstead

1. Jordan Ortuso peeks at the some of the farm's pigs. **2.** Chris and Kevin Bassette hosted the event. **3.** Samantha, John, and Sydney Henningsen strike a pose. **4.** Ken and John Melzen were among the vendors on hand. **5.** Addie Bassette leads a cow around by his horns. **6.** Tori Poulin serves up food. **7.** Thomas Meredith tries his hand on this fun tractor. **8.** Jamie Bassette is in charge of traffic. **9.** Kash and Scarlet Baribault-Ortiz go for a tractor ride. **10.** Many of excited families enjoyed the day's events. **11.** Alyssa and Colton Waterman sample homemade jams. **12.** Joseph Hacker and his dad John try to create a Froot Loop necklace. **13.** Jaiden Chinook does his dinosaur imitation. **14.** Kelly Lake helps make omelets. **15.** Olivia Turner eats a carrot. **16.** Austin Lake, Brendan Feldman, Dan Finucane and Brody Finucane help with parking. **17.** The event provided food and fun for everyone. **18.** John Maze entertains the crowd. **19.** Ayla Riemer hangs out with a furry pig and cow. **20.** Olivia Bassette runs to replenish supplies. **21.** Crowds line up for samples of wine.

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News roundup

School board considers options

The board of education is looking at three options for redistricting after Eastbury Elementary School is closed at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. School officials met during April with parent groups at all six elementary schools to listen to parents' concerns and suggestions, as well as their preference from among the options. The school board will consider that information in June when making a decision on which option to adopt.

Next year school officials will decide on staffing changes. Superintendent Alan Bookman has said they will try to move teachers to new schools in the same proportion as students who will be moving to that school, and that students who will be changing schools will have an opportunity to visit their new school next spring.

The closing of Eastbury is the result of a decline in projected enrollment.

Option I would move 18.5 percent of the town's students; Option II would move 17.5 percent; and Option III would move 28.4 percent.

Details of how many students would be involved and where they would be moved under each scenario are available at the school system's website, glastonburyus.org.

Budget uncertainty remains

The town council has approved a $155.3 million budget with spending for the town and the board of education frozen at current levels and a two percent tax increase.

The move was due in part to a $6.5 reduction in state funding for education in Gov. Dannel Malloy's proposed budget. It's possible some of the money will be restored, but that's not likely to happen until June.

"Move Madness" continues

The CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce's health and wellness program will continue through May 20.

"Move Madness" offers a chance for members and others in town to try more than 130 fitness and fitness-related programs at 20 venues for $25. They include fitness, dance, yoga, chiropractic, cycling, and tennis programs.

Details about specific classes, locations and times are available at the chamber's website, crvchamber.org.

Tea registration is under way

Registration for the Connecticut Audubon Society's traditional afternoon tea have started. The tea will take place June 17 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury, 949 Main St.

Since the event usually sells out, organizers are urging anyone who is interested in attending to make reservations as soon as possible by calling 860-633-8402 or visiting ctaudubon.org/center-at-glastonbury. The price is $30 until June 1, when it will increase to $35.

Money raised will be used to support local center's award-winning education program, Science in Nature, as well as adult and family programs focusing on the conservation and stewardship of Connecticut

27 Quick and Easy Fix Ups to Sell Your Wethersfield Home Fast and for Top Dollar

WETHERSFIELD - Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. And once you have made that decision, you'll want to sell your home for the highest price in the shortest time possible without compromising your sanity. Before you place your home on the market, here's a way to help you to be as prepared as possible.

To assist homesellers, a new industry report has just been released called "27 Valuable Tips That You Should Know to Get Your Home Sold Fast and for Top Dollar." It tackles the important issues you need to know to make your home competitive in today's tough, aggressive marketplace.

Through these 27 tips you will discover how to protect and capitalize on your most important investment, reduce stress, be in control of your situation, and make the best profit possible.

In this report you'll discover how to avoid financial disappointment or worse, a financial disaster when selling your home. Using a common-sense approach, you will get the straight facts about what can make or break the sale of your home.

You owe it to yourself to learn how these important tips will give you the competitive edge to get your home sold fast and for the most amount of money. Order your free report today. To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report call toll-free 1-800-597-7893 and enter 1023. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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This report is courtesy of Sanam Solati Yurczyk, REALTOR®, EXIT Realty Black Rock. Not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale.

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If you have any questions or need additional information please call DeMarco at (860) 951-9411.
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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

River's bird populations and their habitats.

Garden plots, activities offered

Wind Hill Community Farm, the town's only nonprofit community farm, is offering several opportunities for residents to be involved.

The farm is offering a season-long CSA membership with a full range of summer vegetables and herbs that are grown locally and fed with locally produced organic mulch. In addition, a limited number of raised garden beds are available for rent at the farm for people who want to grow their own organic produce.

Volunteer opportunities include the weekly Weed & W(h)ine group on Monday evenings, dinners, helping at the group's Farm Fresh Kids program, or simply spending an hour working in one of the fields.

To learn how to be a local climate change activist or get details about spring and summer programs, send an email to windhillfarmcom@gmail.com or visit windhillfarm.org. **GL**

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Events spotlight

Spring Lamb and Sparrow Grass

Connecticut Farm & Folk Festival

May 20, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Grounds of the Glastonbury Elks Lodge, 98 Woodland Street

860-659-3587 or jill@crvchamber.org

The festival, now in its third year, will feature gourmet food trucks, a dozen musical acts on two stages, a farmers' market, and other family-friendly activities. Admission is $5 and the rain date is May 21.

A community conversation

May 11, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles

Ellen Carter, 860-659-2921 or elcarter99@aol.com, Leslie Ohta at 202-538-1161 or leslieohta@gmail.com, or glastonburymlkci.org.

This event, the second community conversation sponsored by the Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative, will focus on the recent ban on Syrian refugees and is expected to explore whether refugees from Syria post a threat to national security and whether the ban is consistent with the moral and humanitarian values which have shaped the nation's foreign policy. A panel of experts will talk, and advocacy groups will have information about their work. The program will be moderated by Alfred Carter, an educator, sociologist and humanist. A reception featuring Syrian dishes will take place from 6:30 to 7 p.m. The event is free and open to all.

Spring Lamb and Sparrow Grass

May 7, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main Street

Hsgct.org or 860-633-6890

Participants in this adult cooking class will experience colonial cooking and then enjoy their meal together. The meal, prepared with the supervision of costumed docents, will include such springtime

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delicacies as roast leg of lamb with garlic, sparrow grass, known today as asparagus and Persian apple pie, more commonly known as rhubarb pie. The cost is $75 per person, and reservations are required.

Hill and Dale Garden Sale

May 11, 10 a.m.

Hubbard Green at the rear of the Historical Society of Glastonbury

860-633-8987

The Hill and Dale Garden Club's annual plant sale will benefit civic projects and scholarships. Cash, checks and credit cards will be accepted.

Hosta expert Kathie Sisson

Glastonbury Garden Club meeting, 7 to 9 p.m.

St. Luke's Church, 915 Main St.

860-659-0244

Noted hosta expert Kathie Sisson will talk about hostas, their size and color, and their uses in landscaping. Sisson, an Avon resident, has been featured at the American Hosta Society Convention and in This Old House magazine. Guests are welcome to attend for a $10 donation.

Hill and Dale Garden Sale

Springtime Garden Day

May 21, 1 to 4 p.m.

Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main Street

Hsgct.org or 860-633-6890

Springtime Garden Day

The Historical Society of Glastonbury, Partners in Planting and the Glastonbury Garden Club are teaming up to present an educational event centered on the backdoor herb garden and the kitchen garden at the Welles-Shipman-Ward House. Typically, in colonial times the backdoor herb garden was the "medicine cabinet" and also the source of herbs needed for cooking. Garden club members will be available to answer questions about plants and herbs, and members of Glastonbury Partners in Planting will demonstrate how to plant an organic garden, which was the only option in colonial times. Children of all ages are welcome to help plant seeds and can take their own lettuce plant home to nurture and grow. Also that day, Jerusha Welles will be cooking in the home's fireplace, one of the largest colonial fireplaces in the state, using seasonal colonial recipes. Samples will be available. There is no charge for historical society members. A $5 admission for other gueses includes food samples, and entrance and a tour of the historic house and i's property, shed and barns. **GL**

Thank you to the volunteers who helped improve lives for children and families in our community last year.

You gave your time... you gave a piece of yourself. It's not every day that someone like you comes along.

Clockwise from top left: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) in Enfield, 2016 *Year of Caring* at South Windsor Child Development Center, *Stuff the Bus* school supply drive in Hartford, United Way Reader Recognition at Alfred E. Burr School Elementary School in Hartford

/UnitedWayInc @UnitedWayInc /UnitedWayInc @UnitedWayInc UnitedWayInc.org/Volunteer

United Way
United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut

May calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Through May 12: Flux, an exhibition by ceramic artist Elizabeth Guignino, Monday through Thursday, 3 to 8 p.m., Marilyn Q. Vignone Gallery, Glastonbury High School.

1 **Helping children conquer anxiety,** 6:30 p.m., Friends Room, Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. Seating is limited and registration is required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com.

Hosta expert Kathie Sisson speaks at a public meeting of the Glastonbury Garden Club, 7 p.m., St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 915 Main St. Guests are asked to make a $10 donation. 860-633-2283.

2 **Town plan and zoning commission,** 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. glastonbury-ct.gov.

3 **College Financing 101** sponsored by the American Eagle Financial Credit Union, 6 to 7:30 p.m., Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles St.

5 **Bird Walk,** Earle Park, 7 to 8:30 a.m. Meet at CT Audubon Society Center, 1361 Main St. $5 members, $10 non-members. 860-633-8402 or ctaudubon.org. Pre-registration requested. Rain will cancel.

7 **Bird walk** sponsored by the Land Heritage Coalition of Glastonbury, 8 a.m., Longo/Wind Hill Farm. lhcglastonbury.org

Glastonbury Chorus presents "When You Wish Upon a Star" featuring music from Disney movies, 4 p.m., Smith Middle School auditorium, 216 Addison Road. Reception afterward. $8 for adults, $5 for seniors and students. No charge for students, active-duty service personnel in uniform and guests dressed as Disney characters.

9 **Town council,** 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7710 or glastonbury-ct.gov.

Author F. Mark Granato discusses his novel, "This Boy," 6:30 p.m., Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. Seating is limited and registration is required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com.

10 **Eastern coyotes and coy**wolves, 6 to 7:30 p.m., CT Audubon Society Center, 1361 Main St. $8 members, $10 non-members. 860-633-8402 or kneville@ctaudubon.org. Reservations suggested.

11 **Plant sale** sponsored by the Hill and Dale Garden Club, 10 a.m., Hubbard Green, behind the historical society's museum, 1944 Main St. Cash, checks and credit cards welcome. 860-633-8987.

Flight of the Butterflies and Aurora Storm, 6 p.m., Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School planetarium, 95 Oak St. Tickets available at www.glastonburyplanetarium.org for $5. For more information, email Planetarium@Glastonburyus.org or call 860-633-4455, ext. 4923.

Community conversation on the ban on Syrian refugees, 6:30 to 9 p.m., Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles Street. No charge. To learn more, contact Ellen Carter at 860-659-2921 or elcarter99@aol.com, or Leslie Ohta at 202-538-1161 or leslieohta@gmail.com, or visit glastonburymlkci.org.

12 **Outdoor movie night** featuring "SING" sponsored by the Bodeau Realty Group, 7:30 p.m., Riverfront Park, 200 Welles St. Admission is an unwrapped new book or toy for any age. 860-659-1551.

13 **Genealogy group** sponsored by the Welsh Society of Western New England, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Participants are asked to bring their Welsh family tree and a lunch dish to share. Reserve a spot by emailing WelshWNE@gmail.com. Directions will be forwarded at that time.

Flight of the Butterflies and Aurora Storm, 11 a.m., Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School planetarium, 95 Oak St. Tickets available at www.glastonburyplanetarium.org for $4.25. For more information, email Planetarium@Glastonburyus.org or call 860-633-4455, ext. 4923.

Spring book sale sponsored by the Friends of the Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., front lawn of the library, 2407 Main St. In case of rain, the sale will take place in the enclosed parking deck next door at TD Bank. 860-652-7728 or booksale@friendswtmlib.org.

Heirloom plant sale sponsored by Wind Hill Farm, 8 a.m. to noon, corner of Main Street and Hebron Avenue. No rain date. windhillfarmcom@gmail.com or windhillfarm.org.

Ninth Annual Bill Landers Building Bridges Memorial 5K, 8:30 a.m., Hubbard Green. Event will benefit the Glastonbury Education Foundation. Glastonburyeducationfoundation.org.

Author Gregory Nobles discusses the biography of John James Audubon, 1 p.m., CT Audubon Society Center, 1361 Main St. No charge for members, $5 for non-members. 860-633-8402 or kneville@ctaudubon.org. Reservations suggested.

14 **Fourth Annual French Country Market on the Farm,** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Killam & Bassette Farmstead, 14 Tyron Street. Rain date May 14.

16 **Town plan and zoning commission,** 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. glastonbury-ct.gov.

"Keep up with your grandkids: Microsoft Word 101," 3 p.m., Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles St. Sponsored by the Welles-Turner Memorial Library. Seating is limited and registration is required. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com.

20 **Connecticut Farm & Folk Festival**, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Glastonbury Elks Lodge, 98 Woodland St., South Glastonbury. Sponsored by the Connecticut River Valley Chamber of Commerce. $5. Jill@crvchamber.org or 860-659-3587.

Connecticut wine tour bus trip to three vineyards including a cook-out and dessert, meeting time to be determined at the Glastonbury/East Hartford commuter parking lot. $95. Register by calling 860-652-7679 or emailing recreation@glastonbury-ct.gov.

21 **Springtime garden day** for all ages, 1 p.m., Welles-Shipman-Ward House, 972 Main St. No charge for members of the Historical Society of Glastonbury, $5 for non-members. 860-633-6890 or hsgct.org.

22 **Marshall (Mike) Berdan,** who writes about travel and American history and culture, will speak at the Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St., 7 p.m. Sponsored by the Friends of the Welles-Turner Memorial Library.

23 **Town council,** 7 p.m., town hall council chambers, 2155 Main St. 860-652-7710 or glastonbury-ct.gov.

Bring your own craft program for adults, 6:30 to 8 p.m., Welles-Turner Memorial Library, 2407 Main St. 860-652-7720 or wtmlib.com

24 **Understanding the opioid crisis,** 6:30 to 8 p.m., Riverfront Community Center, 300 Welles St. Sponsored by Glastonbury Youth and Family and the town's social services department. **GL**

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We are nearing completion on 68 new one- and two-bedroom Independent Living residences in Seabury's South Wing.

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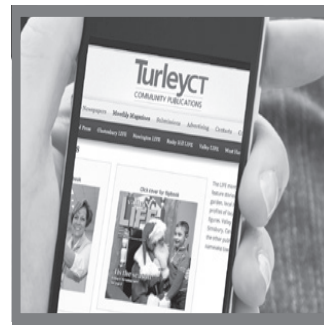

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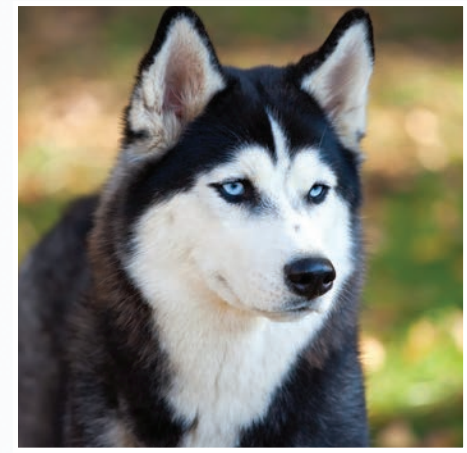

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Note from Nancy

They're still champions to me

No shiny crystal trophy. No fifth consecutive national championship. No 112th win in a row. What a disastrous season for the UCONN women.

What complete bull hockey. I mean, get a grip, people.

These kids – please remember that the youngest among them will be turning 19 this year – were supposed to lose several months ago. Instead, they came up with clutch shots, buzzer-beaters, and record-setting performances and lost in April instead.

Reporters are supposed to be unbiased, but I'll admit to being an avid fan when it comes to these young women. My husband and I have season tickets for all the games played on campus and were there, jumping up and down and screaming, for all nine of the team's victories at Gampel, including the big ones against Baylor last fall and South Carolina a couple of months ago. It's our favorite way to spend the winter.

Our friends know how we feel, so I got lots of condolence messages after the team lost to Mississippi State in the national semifinal, text messages asking if I was OK, emails asking if I was devastated, if I was disappointed in "the girls."

Oddly, after five months of fanaticism, yes, I was okay, no, I wasn't devastated, and I most certainly wasn't disappointed in the team's effort.

If I was disappointed in anything, it was the fact that only 25 or so people showed up to welcome the team back to campus from Dallas, with no students among them.

Coach Geno Auriemma, expounding with his usual Yoda-like wisdom, summed it up well on the last episode of the HBO series about the team's "March to Madness." He said they inherited something that wasn't really theirs, the four consecutive national championships and the winning streak, and were asked to carry it. At some point, he said, it simply got too heavy. Next season they'll be free of that.

As season ticket-holders, we were invited to the university's annual celebration of the season a few weeks ago. It's a private affair in the huge practice facility with good food, lots of speeches, and, best of all, a chance to meet the players. Last year, with the fourth national championship in a row and with Brianna Stewart, Morgan Tuck and Moriah Jefferson leaving, the place was filled to overflowing.

This year there was a decent crowd but a few empty seats.

As they do every year, the team walked in at precisely 7 p.m. and positioned themselves in small groups around the room, Napheesa Collier with Natalie Butler, Crystal Dangerfield with Saniya Chong, Gabby Williams with Kyla Irwin, Kia Nurse with Tierney Lawlor and Katie Lou Samuelson with Batouly Camara and Azura Stevens, transfers who sat out this year but will be in the lineup in the fall.

We did the meet-and-greet and photos ops with most of them before the speeches started. They were all friendly and gracious, putting up with hugs from strangers and some inane conversation. And yes, I did blather to Kia Nurse, who's from Ontario, about my Canadian ancestors. I couldn't help myself.

The UCONN folks did a nice job with it, as always. Yoda – I mean Geno – was thoughtful and thought-provoking, Chris Dailey was hilarious, and the video of highlights from the season reminded us all why we cared and why we were there.

It's easy to focus on one game, but as Geno said, it was an amazing season. I'm looking forward to the next one.

– *Nancy Thompson*

glastonbury LIFE

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Moon Nicknames

This month, the full moon – or the full "Flower" moon – falls on the 10th. Appropriately named as spring warmth triggers the blossoming of flowers. Native Americans started naming moons to help track the seasons. There was a lot of variability, between regions and tribes – at times leading to the same moon having more than one name. Over time, the naming was streamlined and applied to the Gregorian calendar.

In January, there is the Wolf Moon as during the month wolves would howl out of hunger. Next, there is the Snow Moon in February, due to the snowy nature of the month. March has the Worm Moon, as the softening ground allows earthworms to emerge. In April, there is the Pink Moon, not due to the color of the moon but of the ground phlox flower that becomes widespread during spring. June features the Strawberry Moon, as this is the time when harvesting of the fruit typically happens. In July, with bucks growing new antlers, it's the Buck Moon. August has the Sturgeon Moon, as it is the time to best catch this fish. In September there is the Harvest Moon. With colder months ahead, the Hunter's Moon signals the time to hunt in October. The 11th month of the year has the Beaver Moon, corresponding to the time to set traps. Finally, in December there is the Cold Moon – aptly named for the longer nights and colder temperatures. **GL**

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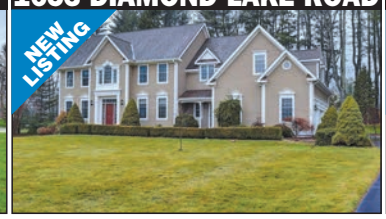

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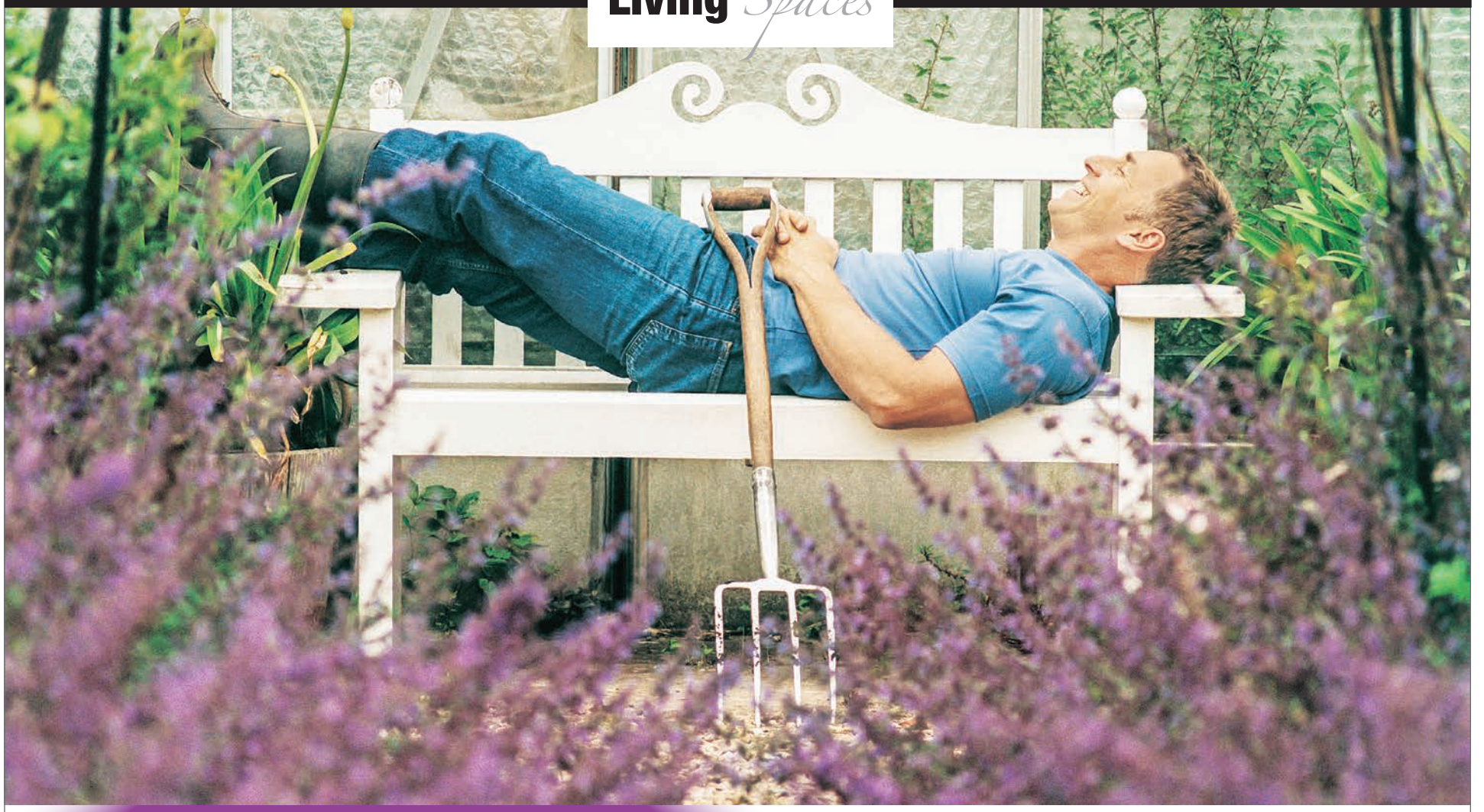

Men who garden

Women aren't the only ones growing flowers

by Lynn Woike
Editor

While most garden clubs are comprised totally of women, some organizations formed around individual plant varieties have many men.

Steve Kovack was an honorary member of the West Hartford Garden Club until becoming a full member about four years ago.

He is its only male member.

The Farmington Garden Club has none. Hill and Dale Garden Club in Glastonbury and the Avon Garden Club also have no male members.

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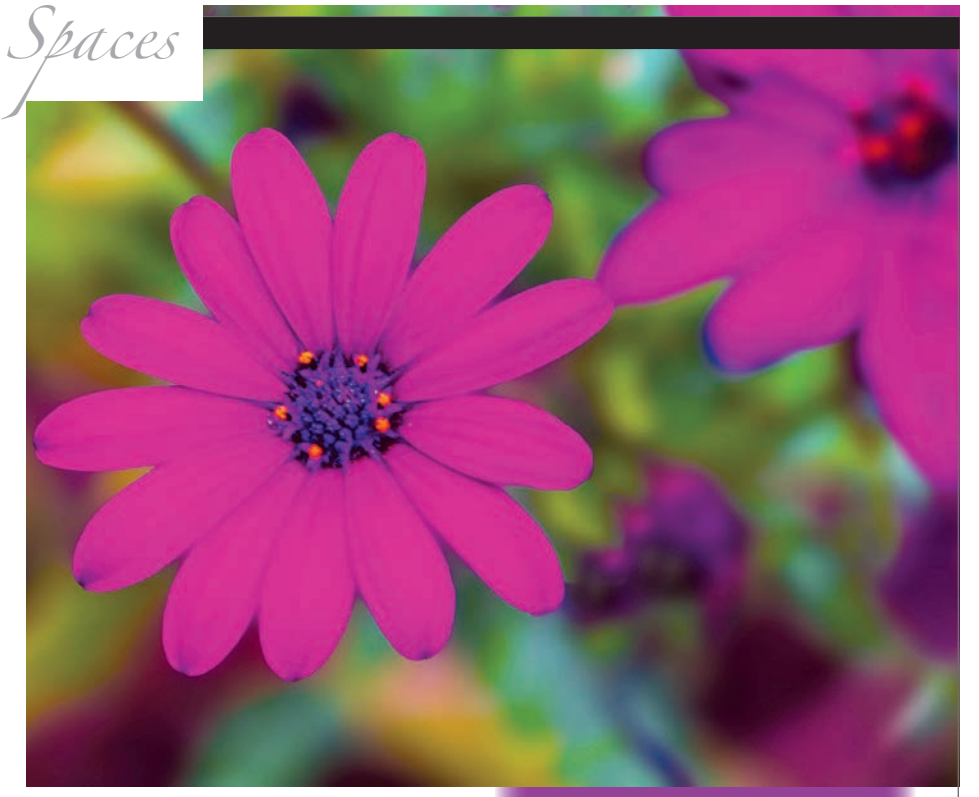

said Jan Brigham.

Kovack said he grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania, with 200 chickens, three cows, some beef cattle and pigs – and an acre of garden that he began running when he was about 12. When he moved to West Hartford, he planted shade gardens around the house along with taking a community garden plot.

"I grow everything," he said.

The reason he became involved with the club is because he was taking the master gardener course that required him to do a volunteer project. The West Hartford Garden Club was taking care of the Butler-McCook House and Garden in Hartford and asked him to develop a shade garden. It required him to clear away debris and rip out a lot of ivy, including poison ivy and otherwise "sawing through this forest."

"The West Hartford Garden Club ladies fell in love with me," Kovack said, adding that he could be the only man in the club because he thinks "a lot of men get intimidated."

"In the spring I came back. Thousands and thousands of bulbs were in blossom. They had been dormant and so they started coming up. That blew my mind. I was part of this creation."

Kovack went on to help plant hostas and built a path though the woods.

"I tried to get other men to join, but they just didn't. They just don't want to be part of it for some reason. … The men that I know don't do much gardening and they're all very independent."

He thought perhaps it had to do with the socializing that goes on among women and men not wanting to be part of groups, yet he talked about the friendships that he has formed with a diverse group of men he's gardened with in the community plot for years.

"The garden club is so excited about the community garden, they want to put us on their tour" for 2018, Kovack said.

Although The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America lists no clubs in Connecticut, there is one just for men: the Men's Garden Club of Wethersfield. It formed in 1956.

The November Richard Prentice moved into his new home, the gardens were dormant.

"In the spring I was overwhelmed with new growth and didn't know what to do about it," he said.

He attended the plant sale held by the club in May and became a member after that. Now he is the treasurer.

"Sometimes when I mention that I'm in a men's garden club I'm asked if I'm gay. … Maybe that's why few men join. I've been to women's club meetings. They are much more organized. That's a problem," he said.

The club belonged to the National Garden Clubs, but was ejected because of its men only membership. While the club hasn't exactly forbade women to join, it hasn't recruited women and one that was once sponsored by a member several years ago "got nowhere."

According to its Facebook page, the club devotes "its energies to the promotion of the full appreciation of gardening, landscaping and horticultural activities," promoting "higher garden standards in the community for the benefit of individuals" and instilling "the love of growing plants in the hearts of children, particularly among those for whom opportunities are restricted."

The club also promotes friendships, civic activities and a general interest in individual, private and community gardens, planting and parks.

Its most significant community project is the care and maintenance

"We do enjoy solving problems when they arise. … We try to help each other."

–Fred Odell

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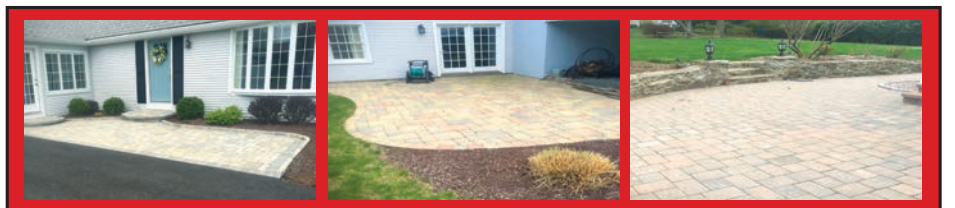

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of the Frank W. Weston Rose Garden, located adjacent to the town hall and library. Members meet Saturday mornings during the growing season to care for the beds. Its annual plant sale the day before Mother's Day draws crowds, both for the hanging baskets and vegetable plants, and also for the "home-grown," a large variety of perennials that have been split from members' gardens.

That's what hooked Fred Odell when he was 35 ... 38 years ago.

He'd done planting at his prior home, so when he saw a sign for the plant sale, he stopped.

"Man," he remembered thinking, "these were the friendliest guys I've ever met."

He ended up going home and getting some plants he'd been growing, bringing them back to the sale. That got him invited to the post-plant sale meeting.

"Within a year, I'm running the plant sale. Then I got to be president," Odell said.

He also became a master gardener.

At 72, he said he's one of the youngest members. Most are retired and older. While most are from Wethersfied, members also come from Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Cromwell and South Windsor.

"We do enjoy solving problems when they arise. ... We try to help each other," he said, noting that seems to be what was behind the formation of the original group of men – some who were farmers and others in a variety of agricultural occupations.

"They had a group of guys who'd just chat. They were friends. It was very informal. ... They would meet at each other's houses once a month or so."

As more men joined, the club formed. Officers were elected, committees were formed and speakers were featured. Social events got added to the schedule.

Now, rather than corn and tobacco, conversations are more likely to be about shrubs and lawns, said Odell, who estimated that a third of the club lives in condominiums, "and their gardening is far reduced from what it was, and they're not into homegrown so much anymore."

When the club formed, he said, "There were four or five other gardening clubs and presently there are three women's gardening clubs in town. ... Twice in my 30 years, females have inquired about becoming members, but it's an issue that kind of dies on the vine. It's not something that's on the top of our list. ... None of our wives want any part of us. They do their own thing.

"I'm in many other organizations, and women tend to be detail oriented, very thorough. Men are scattered."

While he said he's "never attempted to join any other garden club," for a while he was a member of the New England Hosta Society and, together with his wife, who he said is "much more of a gardener," he began a garden club at the lake where they have a summer home.

Tom Mierzejewski and his wife, Jenne McDermott, love gardening and maintain a parklike setting around their home, but their real passion is orchids, which they use to decorate their home's interior.

He supported his wife in founding the Nutmeg State Orchid Society in 2008 – she as the president and he as the treasurer. Of its 200 members, nearly half are men – some who have joined with their wives and some who come alone.

While the median age is about 50, it's a diverse group in both expertise and in age, including a teenage boy.

Hearing most garden clubs have no male members, Mierzejewski was surprised and wondered how clubs went about recruiting members.

The Nutmeg State Orchid Society prides itself on making everyone feel welcome, he said, with name tags, emails and a welcome package. GL

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Sharing spaces

Experts say not to fear bats in the attic, help protect an important species

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Bats have an image problem. Despite the fact that they're mammals (like us!), many people associate the creatures solely with Halloween, vampires and Bruce Wayne.

"Everyone cares about the charismatic animals, the pretty ones, the cute ones," said Cheri Collins, nature center coordinator at Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center in Wethersfield.

Jim Woodworth, stewardship chair of Great Meadows Conservation Trust, knows first-hand how skittish people are around the creatures.

"Our family's relationship with bats at the 18th century brick house on River Road began the summer I began dating my wife, Kate, who lived in the house. That would be over 50 years ago. One night she felt a presence flitting around her bedroom, and when her mother responded to her cries and peeked into the bedroom, she yelled to her husband, 'My God, it's a bat!' and then shut the door on the bat and her daughter," Woodworth related.

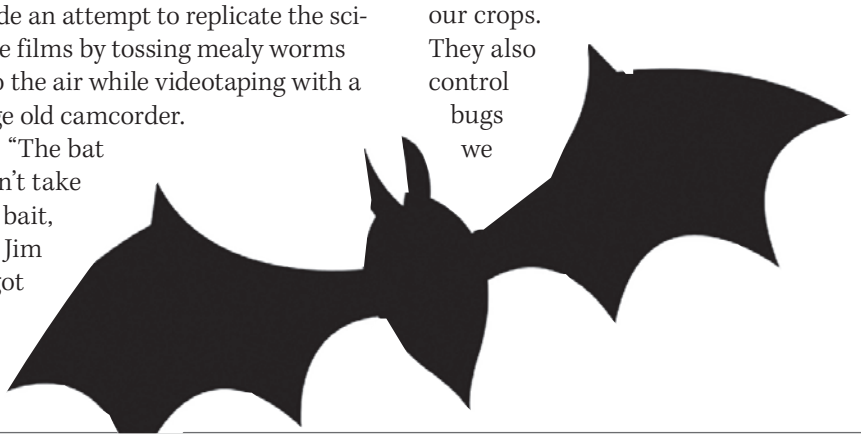
After moving into the Wethersfield home almost 40 years ago, Woodworth and his family made peace with the bats.

"There was always evidence of bats living in the unfinished third floor, and each summer on a hot and humid night, they'd make an appearance downstairs. This would necessitate arming oneself with a hat and a tennis racquet, opening the windows and hoping to witness the bat flying out the window," he said. "As our older son reached fifth or sixth grade, we observed a bat in the attic and made an attempt to replicate the science films by tossing mealy worms into the air while videotaping with a large old camcorder.

"The bat didn't take the bait, but Jim Jr. got a good grade on his project. He went on to enjoy a summer internship studying the breeding habitat of bats in Arizona. They would catch bats at night in 'mist nets,' attach tiny transmitters to lactating females and then spend the day tracking the signals to, for example, a lightning blasted tree cavity."

Paying close attention to the bat population is wise, Collins said.

"We really do need our bats. They're one of the major controls of agricultural pests and help control the populations of the corn earworm and other pests that feed on our crops. They also control bugs we



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don't personally like [such as] mosquitos," she explained.

"Bats are an important part of our food chain, especially when it comes to insect control. Some bats eat several hundred insects per hour and feed for four to five hours a night, so a good-sized bat colony consumes many thousands of insects nightly," said Jay Kaplan, director of Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton.

Unfortunately, the bat population in Connecticut and many other states has been decimated.

"Bats in Connecticut have been subjected to the 'white-nose syndrome,' a fungus that originated in the mountains of New York state.

Recent studies indicate the fungus may have been brought from Europe by hikers. It has now spread through the East and is responsible for the deaths of many thousands of bats of several species. It matters because bats are so valuable in controlling populations of insects that may spread disease or damage crops," Kaplan explained.

"The shocking drop in the population of bats will cause some very serious ripple effects. It may not happen soon, but it will happen," Collins said. "They control many agricultural pests, which will destroy many crops. One of the side effects of those pests not being controlled by natural means is we may end up using more pesticides."

"There was always evidence of bats living in the unfinished third floor, and each summer on a hot and humid night, they'd make an appearance downstairs. This would necessitate arming oneself with a hat and a tennis racquet, opening the windows and hoping to witness the bat flying out the window."

–Jim Woodworth

According to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, white-nose syndrome has killed more than 5.7 million bats since it was documented in New York in the winter of 2006-07. It is named for the white fungus – called Pseudogymnoascus destructans and formerly known as Geomyces destructans – that is seen on a bat's nose and/or wings while in hibernation. At the end of the 2012-13 hibernating season, bats with WNS were confirmed in 22 states and five Canadian provinces.

Collins said that 95 percent of small bats in the Northeast has been lost since 2006. Each year, the WNS is spreading further west, and has even been found in Washington state, which she called "alarming."

"White-nose syndrome is a cold-loving fungus that we tend to find in places that are moist and 52-degrees Fahrenheit, which tends to be where bats are hibernating. It first appeared in 2006 in New York state. The supposition is it traveled in on the equipment or boots of a caver. It appears to be related to a European fungus, but there's nothing in our ecosystem to control that fungus and it took off," she explained.
"It infects the animals and goes unto their lungs, into their bloodstream, and causes them to be unable to hibernate. They go out in the winter to eat and there's nothing to eat and they starve."

There are eight species of bats in Connecticut, as of 2005.

"We've had to put more of our species on the state endangered species list. We [put that] status on four of

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them; four are severely endangered," Collins said. "These were very common previously."

For example, she said the big brown bat population has declined 40 to 50 percent.

"You usually see them flying around homes. They'll end up in the attic of homes," she said.

It's not just the current bats that people should be concerned about.

"Don't kill them. A number of people, as soon as they see a bat, they kill them. Bats only have one baby a year and if that one doesn't survive, that's it. There is one species that has twins. But they reproduce very, very slowly. For the population to recover, it will take a very long time," she said. "The one thing we need to do is not kill bats. Do not go into caves in the winter because that's where they're hibernating. If there's a bat in your house or bats in your attic, call a nuisance wildlife control officer. They're licensed by the state. Ask them to come and help remove it humanely. If they've gotten into your house or attic, you need to find out where they're getting in and block that. They don't chew, so if you can block them out, they won't come back in. Mainly, you should not be alarmed if you see a bat. They're not interested in people at all."

Around August each year, juveniles start to go out on their own.

"They need to eat a lot before they go to hibernate in winter," Collins said.

Bats in the house

Woodworth is a fan of the creatures and has been pleased to occasionally encounter one.

"After the terrible white-nose syndrome decimated bat populations in the region, bats seemed to have abandoned the attic. However, in the last couple of years when my younger son and his wife took over the house, bats resumed their residence and their summer visitations."

He recounted a call last summer from his daughter-in-law to shoo a bat from the bathroom.

"Fortunately, the little brown creature held the position it had taken up under a shampoo bottle until I had time to open the screen, lift up the bottle, grab it and toss it out the window. It took flight and fluttered away," he said.

Woodworth isn't the only one who's looking out for the bats.

William Parsons, a masonry restoration contractor from Farmington, was working on The Linden in downtown Hartford when he realized that the work would displace bats.

"I was thinking I was depriving bats of a home, so I bought a bat house and put it five stories up," he said. "I think bats are wonderful because I don't like mosquitoes.
I love spiders, too. I've always had an affection for spiders because they eat flies. Bats are a very helpful part of our ecosystem. ... The bat house I purchased and installed for around $100 can hold up to 400 bats."

While this was the first bat house he put up, it wasn't his first encounter with the furry creatures. In 2001 he was working on a building in Barkhamsted, rebuilding the chimney.

"I couldn't go on the roof. It was a slimy, old slate roof and they were going to tear the roof down. They told me they had a broken window and there would be 700 [bats] leaving the building at a time. I go up on a ladder, a tall ladder, and cut around the chimney from the inside. ... We went up on a ladder to cut a circle around the roof and all of a sudden all 700 bats came out in the room we were in. It was like a Vincent Price horror movie. They started circling the chimney in like a doughnut vortex. Then it all calmed down and they left," he remembered with a laugh. "I'm no biological expert on bats. I've seen bats all my life. People have an inordinate fear of bats. There's nothing to be scared of."

He's not the only one trying to offer bats a home.

Rick Bailey Sr., store manager of Wild Birds Unlimited in Glastonbury, said the shop sells a number of bat houses in various designs and styles to help protect bats, the most common species of which in Connecticut are the brown and big brown bats.

"We have bat houses that start at 20 bats, 25 bats, 30 bats. We have one that will do 100. Our largest will hold

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300 bats," he said. "They are community-based. They are going to hibernate in shelters together, live in houses together or wherever they have protection. Caves can hold thousands of bats. They'll be side by side in the cave."

Prices for the houses at Wild Birds Unlimited start at $35.

"It is a shelter and it keeps them out of the sun. Bats go dormant during the day. When you mount a bat house, you have to keep the area clear. At dusk you can actually watch them drop out of the bat house four to five feet before they fly," he said. "When you would see bats is at dusk, when the sun starts going down. That's when they'll leave their bat house or the area they're housed in. At dusk, they'll start hunting right away. They start feeding, start picking off the insects that are in the air."

There are a number of requirements for hanging a bat house so it will be beneficial; it's not enough to simply hang it from a tree.

"We recommend that they put them facing in a southeasterly direction, in front of a tree where it's opened and exposed, 12 to 15 feet high. It should get 10 to 12 hours of sun a day preferably. The bats like it warm. Basically, [the direction] is to protect it from a north-facing wind, storms that come out of the north. It gives it that southerly exposure and, yet, at the same time, protects from the north wind," Bailey explained. "You put it up and you keep an eye on it, too. When colonies develop, you can actually monitor the babies. The parents will drop out of the bat house and go out and feed, and they leave the infants. You can check in [on the house] in that time frame. You shouldn't do that more than once a week."

It's rare, but once in a while, Bailey said that other creatures, such as bees, might try to set up in the bat houses. In that case, it's advised that you clean out the house. Many of the houses easily open for cleaning. Mostly, it's a set-it-and-forget-it operation.

Some people make watching the bats a nightly ritual.

"They'll have their Adirondack chairs set out at cocktail hour, then they wait for them to drop out of their bat houses," said Bailey, who noted the houses are just one part of the equation. "It gives them a place to be protected and to go and to prosper. If enough people do that, hopefully, with this white-nose syndrome, the professionals can get a handle on that and they can begin prospering again. Right now, they need help."

Scott McBride, a jewelry designer in West Hartford, bought his first bat house last summer.

"When I moved into my home a few years ago, I had noticed that there were some bats flying around in the evening when I was grilling one night. I wasn't afraid, but rather intrigued. Our community is getting gobbled up by residential structures taking away the natural environment for these guys. I decided to purchase a bat house to give these furry guys a safe, protected home," McBride said.

He found a bright place to hang the house.

'Like tiny dogs with wings'

Many people don't like bats, but Collins said there's no reason to fear the creatures of the night.

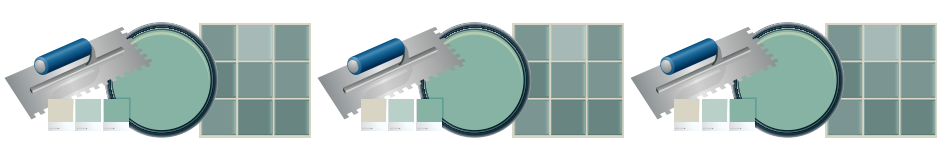
"Bats are tiny. People have a tendency when something scares them to make it larger in their minds. These guys are very little, like the size of mice. Their wing span is long, but they're little," she said. "They're cute. They look like little tiny dogs with wings."

She finds much to like about the creatures.

"They live very, very long. They're very intelligent. They're very good at problem solving. They don't see all that well, but they hear brilliantly. That's how they find their way around. Loud noises produce echoes and their ears interpret these echoes," she said.

If your knowledge of bats comes from vampire lore, she's quick to reassure that Connecticut's bats don't want to suck your blood.

"They have cute little teeth. We



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don't have vampire bats. Most of the time, they can't even break the skin," she said.

Which doesn't mean you shouldn't use caution if you find a bat in your home.

"Anything with a mouth has the potential to bite you if they feel threatened. Don't pick them up. Don't try to touch them. Even though they're cute, they're not pets. We have a Bambi-esque feeling about a lot of wildlife, that they're nice, sweet pets, and they're not. You have to use some common sense and caution," she said.

She knows her love of bats isn't the norm.

"I've always been attracted to species that other people don't like. I like snakes. I like spiders," said Collins, who also likes traditional animals, such as cats.

She thinks that people will love bats if they just give them a chance.

Kaplan also would like to set the record straight about bats.

"There are so many bat myths that are just simply untrue. Bats do not get tangled in people's hair. They have nothing to do with vampires – vampire bats are found in South America and other tropical areas and do not live in Connecticut. Bats rarely have rabies; the estimates are one in a thousand. Although if one is bitten by a bat, the bat must be caught and tested as rabies is generally a fatal disease," he said.

Collins believes those with a preconceived notion about bats should look more closely.

"Maybe we're hard-wired to be afraid of nighttime things. Creatures of the night are scary. Religion latched onto night creatures as evil. ... It entered the folk consciousness and people are still afraid of creatures of the dark. They're unusual. They're out at night and that makes them odd. They fly and we don't, so that makes them odd; and they're not birds and that makes them odd," she mused. **GL**

Learn more about bats on the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection website at www.ct.gov/deep/ or visit batconservation.org, batcon.org or batweek.org.

Bat facts:

1. There are eight bat species in Connecticut: Little Brown Bat (Myotis lucifugus); Big Brown Bat (Eptesicus fuscus); Eastern Long-eared Bat (Myotis septentrionalis); Eastern Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus subflavus);
Silver-haired Bat (Lasionycteris noctivagans); Hoary Bat (Lasiurus cinereus); Red Bat (Lasiurus borealis); Indiana Bat (Myotis sodalis)

2. The two most common bats in Connecticut are the Little Brown and Big Brown Bats. The six remaining species are less common and seldom seen.

3. In general, bats are not dangerous. Like any other mammal, they can carry rabies, although less than 1 percent of all bats are infected with the virus.

4. Bats do not get caught in people's hair. Bats that swoop near people are usually after insects such as mosquitoes.

5. A single little brown bat can eat 1,200 mosquitoes in an hour.

6. There are almost 1,000 different species of bats in the world.

7. Only three species of bats feed on animal blood. These vampire bats prefer to drink cattle blood and are only found in Latin America.

8. The smallest bat is the size of a small mouse; the largest, a fruit eater, has a 6-foot wingspan.

9. Bats have varied diets: 70 percent eat insects; many tropical species eat fruit or drink flower nectar; some bats even catch frogs and fish.

-Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

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Living *Spaces*

Finding the right fencing fit

Homeowners choose to erect fences on their properties for various reasons. Parents may find fences provide peace of mind during those times when their youngsters are playing in the yard, while other homeowners prefer fences for the privacy they can provide.

Whatever compels homeowners to consider fencing for their properties, those that have decided to install fencing will soon realize they have numerous options. Finding the right fencing material for your property requires considering a host of factors, including budget and personal style.

Aluminum

Aluminum fencing is ideal for those looking for something that's both ornamental and functional. Aluminum fencing may not appeal to those homeowners whose biggest priority is privacy, as aluminum fences are not solid walls. But aluminum fences are typically low maintenance, and they can be effective at keeping both kids and pets in the yard.

Aluminum fences painted with a rust-inhibiting primer may require even less maintenance than aluminum fences painted without primer.

Bamboo

Bamboo is a less traditional fencing option that may appeal to homeowners who want to do something that's both different and eco-friendly. Bamboo grows naturally, which should appeal to homeowners who want their homes to have as little negative impact on the environment as possible. Bamboo provides ample privacy and comes in various styles. Homeowners should consult with a fencing specialist before choosing a style so they can be certain they choose the most climate-appropriate option.

Chain-link

Chain-link fences may not add the aesthetic appeal homeowners are looking for, but they are relatively inexpensive, durable and functional. Chain-link fences are low maintenance, though homeowners looking for fences to provide some privacy may need to get creative if they install chain-link fencing. Planting flowers, shrubbery or trees near chain-link fences can add some aesthetic appeal and a little privacy.

Vinyl

Among the more expensive fencing options, vinyl can make up for that initial sticker shock thanks to its durability. In addition, vinyl fences require little maintenance, saving homeowners the expense of paying for upkeep such as repainting. Vinyl fencing comes in various styles, and homeowners can choose the style that best suits their priorities with regard to aesthetic appeal and privacy.

Wood

Of course, no discussion of fencing would be complete without mentioning wood fencing. Many homeowners love wood fencing because of its versatility with regard to design and color. The options are endless when it comes to crafting wood fencing, which also can be stained in any color homeowners prefer. Wood fencing can be designed not only for homeowners who prioritize privacy, but it also can be crafted for homeowners for whom privacy is not a significant concern. Wood is a relatively inexpensive fencing material, but the maintenance required to keep wood fencing looking great can sometimes be costly and time-consuming.

Options abound for homeowners looking to add fencing. Homeowners hesitant to choose a material and/or install their own fencing can consult local professionals to find the best fencing fit for a property. **GL**

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Green tips for black thumb gardeners

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

As springtime rolls in and yards turn from muddy brown to fresh green, it can be challenging for those who have a self-described "black thumb" in the garden.

With a few simple tips, however, those with gardening difficulties can start to get their plants in shape.

Before giving up completely on being able to garden, there are a few questions that should be asked.

"What exactly are you trying to grow? Are you basing it on one experience, or have you repetitively tried different plants in different areas?" said Don Woods, owner of Stonehedge Landscaping and Garden Center in Newington. "There's usually a reason."

Woods suggested that for some people it might be necessary to have their soil tested to make sure that it is hospitable for growing.

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Adding topsoil or compost could help to improve growing conditions.

"I would definitely recommend that they start from the ground up," Peggy Bosco, co-owner of Bosco's Garden Center and Landscaping in Simsbury, advised.

"You want to enrich your soil because that's where your plants get all their nutrients from."

For those who need to improve their soil, Bosco recommended using an organic topsoil as opposed to a synthetic one.

"Every time you dig a hole to put something in the ground, that plant is going to be there for years," she said. "Organic soil would build that base organically as opposed to keeping a synthetic product there."

Another large piece of advice from planting professionals stems from a common problem they have seen with clients.

"Number one, don't overwater," Bruce McCue, owner of McCue Gardens in Wethersfield, said.

While many plants simply require water, soil and sunlight, too much water can be irreversibly damaging.

"The worst thing is overwatering a plant, actually, because once you rot the root system, you can't bring it back," Bosco said.

"Overwatering tends to be worse than underwatering."

There are clues to look for that show a plant is being overwatered, including wilting when the soil is wet, brown leaves and rotting roots. According to Bosco, watching plants to see what they need is a crucial piece of gardening.

"The leaves and the plants will show you when they need water. They're talking to you, you just have to know how to listen," she said. "Everybody that works here is educated in that field. They would tell you how a plant shows you that it's thirsty."

Each of the garden professionals also stressed the importance of knowing what you are planting and where.

"Read the tags as to whether it goes in the sun or shade," McCue said. "A lot of people will put a plant for shade in the sun and a plant for sun in the shade, and that's not a good environment for them to grow."

Bosco agreed looking at a garden or yard's specific conditions is integral to the success or failure of a plant.

The experts said that people should remain realistic about what they can plant, and the professionals at each of their garden centers can help guide visitors toward making the right choices.

"There definitely are plants that are easier to grow than others," Bosco said. "Native plants are typically easier. Once you start getting into specialties and perennials, those would usually need special fertilizers."

"If you're specifically looking at gardens, tomatoes are easy. If you're doing perennials, hostas are easy. Most trees and shrubs are relatively easy to grow," Woods said. "It's really about proper depth and proper after-care."

Most importantly, all three of the plant experts encourage those who believe they have a "black thumb" to ask questions at their local gardening center.

"We have people here who can help with any of those questions," Woods said. "People can always come by and get help." **GL**

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